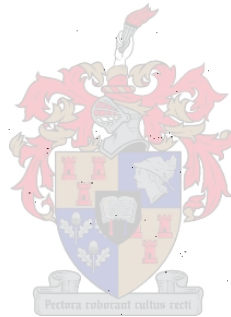


**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM
AND THE STRUGGLE FOR POWER:
A STUDY IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION**

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Doctor of Education
at the
University of Stellenbosch**

Promoter: Prof J.C. Steyn

July 1995

DECLARATION

I the undersigned hereby declare that the work contained in this dissertation is my own original work and has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted at any university for a degree.

MELANÉ COETZEE

27 July 1995
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DATE

SUMMARY

The fact that *meanings of what is transmitted in schools* is under attack from various power struggles has focused attention on the role of curricular knowledge as a supposed instrument of cultural domination and/or discrimination. Hence, in this study the power of knowledge (or "truth") is explored in regard to both its purpose and the person or group in control of that purpose, while the struggle for power is viewed in the light of attempts (or demands on the school curriculum) to gain partial or complete control of the purpose and selection of curricular knowledge.

So as to gain an understanding of the relationship between the struggle for power and the school curriculum, *five examples of power struggles* have been selected as a focus on the most important trends in the prevailing demands on the school curriculum: *Feminism*, the *Gay movement*, *People's Education*, the *economy* and the *environment* (the Green movement).

The outcome of this study is that, in one way or another, most demands on the school curriculum reflect the fact that it is the dominant Western cultural tradition that is suffering a *crisis*. Increasingly, the intensifying demands on the school curriculum is symptomatic of a broader crisis, of a challenge to the Western-oriented interpretation of *truth* with its main roots in science and the perception that access to the economy is imperative to the "life chances", or visions of accumulated (personal) wealth, of the majority of people on earth.

Therefore, underlying most *demands* on the school curriculum is the crucial question of the fundamental aims of education interpreted in terms of the (at times) competing aims of the various power struggles. Criticism of, and demands on, the school curriculum are mostly influenced by *changing interpretations of freedom, equality and human dignity*. Likewise, changes in the social consciousness profoundly influence the legitimization of truth (or the power of knowledge) in accordance with changing interpretations of the democratic ideal in terms of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Ongoing power struggles (or demands on the school curriculum), therefore, have the important function of preserving a *democratic balance between power and knowledge* in the school curriculum.

OPSOMMING

Die feit dat die *betekenis van dit wat in die skool oorgedra word* die skyf geword het van groepe wat aan die magstryd deelneem, vestig die aandag op die skoolkurrikulum as 'n hulpmiddel tot oorheersing en/of diskriminasie. In hierdie studie word die mag van kennis (of "waarheid") verken, enersyds wat die doel en andersyds wat die persoon of groep in beheer van dié doel betref, terwyl die magstryd in verband gebring word met pogings (eise) om gedeeltelike of algehele beheer oor die doel en keuse van die inhoud van die skoolkurrikulum te verkry.

In 'n poging om die verhouding tussen die magstryd en die skoolkurrikulum beter te verstaan, word vyf voorbeelde van 'n *magstryd* voorgehou om die belangrikste neigings in die hedendaagse eise teen die skoolkurrikulum toe te lig: Die *Feminisme*, die "Gay"-beweging, "*People's Education*", die *ekonomie* en die *omgewing* (die Groen-beweging).

Daar word tot die slotsom gekom dat eise wat aan die skoolkurrikulum gestel word 'n weerspieëling is daarvan dat die dominante Westerse kulturele tradisie 'n krisis beleef. Hierdie verskerpte eise aan die skoolkurrikulum is al hoe meer simptome van 'n breër krisis, naamlik die protes teen die Westers-georiënteerde interpretasie van *waarheid* gebaseer op sowel die wetenskap as die persepsie dat toegang tot die ekonomie allernoodsaaklik vir die selfverwesenliking, oftewel visioene van opgegaarde (persoonlike) rykdom, van die meeste mense op aarde is.

Die meeste eise aan die skoolkurrikulum word gebaseer op die kernvraag oor die basiese doelstellings van die opvoeding soos vertolk volgens die (soms teenstrydige) doelstellings onder die potensiële magsgroepe. Sulke eise word meestal beïnvloed deur *klemverskuiwings in die vertolking van vryheid, gelykheid en menswaardigheid*. Eweneens beïnvloed klemverskuiwings in die sosiale gewete (of "powershifts") die legitimiteit van die waarheid (of die mag van kennis) ooreenkomstig veranderende interpretasies van die demokratiese ideaal soos omskryf deur die Universele Handves van Menseregte. Voortdurende magstryde (of eise ten opsigte van die kurrikulum) speel dus 'n baie belangrike rol om 'n *demokratiese balans tussen mag en kennis* in die skoolkurrikulum te handhaaf.

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- The Heavenly Father who made this possible

Melané Coetzee

LUTZVILLE

27 July 1995

*Do not reject what you do not understand
for with understanding there may be acceptance*

Dedicated to Sakkie

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*Because a freeman ought not to be a slave
in the acquisition of knowledge of any kind...
(Plato)*

CHAPTER 1

GENERAL ORIENTATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In the world today there is an increasing *concern* with the role of *knowledge* in justifying or challenging the *balance of power* in society. The main reason is that different groups, as Eliot Freidson (1988:ix) so aptly puts it, "are often represented as the creators and proponents of particular bodies of knowledge that play important roles in shaping both social policy and the institutions of everyday life". Increasingly "they and their knowledge are said to have power" and "such knowledge is said by many to constitute a new form of domination over our lives" (Freidson 1988:1); thus "knowledge becomes power" and the rationale behind *the struggle for power* a cultural dilemma – the crisis of the dominant Western cultural ideal – which affects "the nature of meanings to be transmitted in schools" (Bantock quoted in Whitty 1985:11–12).

Moreover, in these times of unprecedented change and turbulent transition, the influence of a growing awareness of "the societal values of freedom, equality" and "human dignity" on the *reinterpretation of democracy* (Van Scotter *et al* 1979:120) has led to changing and intensifying *demands* on the school curriculum which, in turn, has focused attention on the growing economic, cultural and ecological dilemmas facing nations worldwide (Boomer, Lester, Onore & Cook 1992:ix).

As a result of this, and because society has been turning more and more to the school curriculum as a means of remediating and alleviating its

problems (The Encyclopedia of Education 1971:573), criticism of and demands on the school curriculum is a recurring feature of many a public debate in the ongoing struggle for power and the establishment of a "new" democratic balance of power in society.

All this, as well as the fact that both the school curriculum and the struggle for power are generally perceived as (an) important vehicle(s) of ideas, has a direct bearing on the theme explored in this study: The universal problem of *power* and the *curriculum* in terms of (primarily) a *history and philosophy of education perspective*.

1.2 SELECTED TITLE AND DEFINITION OF TERMS

When looking at the selected topic of study, *The School Curriculum and the Struggle for Power: A Study in the Philosophy of Education*, it is immediately evident that three different and important concepts will have to be dealt with: "curriculum", "the struggle for power" and "relationship". For the purpose of this study, the term

- (a) "curriculum" will be limited to the *knowledge content* of the school curriculum;
- (b) "the struggle for power" will be taken as pertinent to *the demands* intent on securing the power to control all or parts of the actual knowledge content of the school curriculum; and
- (c) "relationship" will be taken to mean the character arising out of the *interaction* between (a) and (b) above.

Closer attention focuses on "relationship" as the qualifying concept, which means that the most important function of this study will be an *educational philosophical reflection* on the nature of this "relationship" while reference will, of necessity, be made to the sociology of education.

1.3 DELIMITATION OF THE PROBLEM

The struggle for power is a universal phenomenon and not limited to any one particular field or part of our everyday lives. According to Foucault (1986:226), the problem that any struggle for power is faced with is that social relations are characterised by "a reciprocal appeal, a perpetual linking and a perpetual reversal" inherent in such an interaction. The

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result is that domination is at the same time "a general structure of power" as well as "a strategic situation more or less taken for granted and consolidated by means of long-term confrontation between two adversaries". Inherent in domination, therefore, is usually "a mechanism of power resulting from confrontation and its consequences" which is "manifest in a massive and universalising form, at the level of the whole social body" as well as in "the locking of power relations with relations of strategy and the results proceeding from their interaction", the consequence of which is a distinctive balance of power in the social reality (Foucault 1986:226).

Thus, as Young (Whitty 1985:11) has tried to explain, "the organization of knowledge implicit in our own curricula is so much part of our taken-for-granted world" that it was only after the widespread student unrest of the 1960s that attention was drawn to the fact that the problem in education was not one of merely "broadening access to schooling" (Whitty 1985:10) but perhaps the more "crucial question" of the content of the curriculum (Williams quoted in Whitty 1985:11); in other words, the problem of meanings (which is closely related to the notion that meanings are socially constructed and therefore contestable). At the same time it was realised that - mainly because the reinterpretation of truth (and the corresponding reinterpretation of a democratic balance of power in society) usually gives rise to demands on the school curriculum in the struggle to either justify or challenge the traditional balance of power in society - the ongoing power struggle is not only a central concern in the history of societies but in the history of the school curriculum as well.

In *Who Rules Our Schools?* Baker (1994:3) has come to the conclusion that the continuing controversy about what we should teach in schools, "comes down to a battle of what the warring parties see as the fundamental aims of education" (Baker 1994:3). This is an important issue, because, although the school curriculum has formerly been seen as the "transmitter of culture" (Warwick 1975:34), the present era is radically different from earlier centuries and even from the first part of the twentieth century. In the Western-oriented societies we are acquainted with "there is no longer one culture to transmit" and "knowledge is exploding at an alarming rate" (Warwick 1975:37). Hence the *focus* of demands in the

struggle for power in Western-oriented societies is on the breaking down of *divisions*; on changing the *perceptions of important knowledge*, in terms of "the competing aims of the government, the Church, teachers, local government, bureaucrats, employers", parents and various social and/or political pressure groups (Baker 1994:6-7) in their struggle to control the "knowing process", insofar as this is a prerequisite for the power to control *the rules of power* for society as a whole (Beetham 1991:54).

This idea is taken further by Michael Apple (1990:vii), in the Preface to *Ideology and Curriculum*, when he emphasises that the classic question of Herbert Spencer "What knowledge is of most worth?" is one of the most important questions to ask about education. He goes on to say: "This is a deceptively simple question, however, since the conflicts over what should be taught are sharp and deep. It is not 'only' an educational issue, but one that is inherently ideological and political. Whether we recognise it or not, educational issues have always been caught up in the history of class, race, gender, ... religious", economic and political conflicts. The struggle for power (in terms of demands intent on securing the power to control the legitimation of truth) is therefore mostly initiated by "new" interpretations of, and justified by changing perceptions concerning, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on the "premise that every human being is important regardless of racial, national, social, economic or mental status"; and, that a "wide participation in the cultural resources of the society is a fundamental right" of all persons in any social reality (McNeil 1977:231).

The *two main issues* in demands on the curriculum, therefore, are:

1. the way in which the school curriculum reflects the power structure in society; in other words the fact "that control over knowledge is in a very real sense a form of social control" (Henry, Knight, Lingard & Taylor 1990:88), and
2. the "competing definitions of relevant, or useful, knowledge" which in part is a struggle over the "hearts and minds" of people or an attempt to control the "knowing process" (Henry *et al* 1990:86-87).

But, as Baker (1994:8) goes on to say, "whether or not the aims of schooling are decided by the market, by the underlying social and

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economic structure or by powerful interest groups", *three important aims of the school curriculum* can be discerned: individual, social and economic. Although all three are important, shifts in priorities influence the relative importance of each of these three in any given society at any given time. In short, there is never only one answer to the problem concerning the content of the school curriculum. In other words the actual knowledge content of the school curriculum, or the answer to the question as to what shall we teach in our schools, is dependent upon "who wins in the struggle for power in our schools" (Baker 1994:4). It has to be remembered that the school curriculum is not devised in a vacuum. "Thus whether we like it or not, differential power intrudes into the heart of curriculum and teaching" and "there are strong connections between formal and informal knowledge within the school and the larger society with all its inequalities" (Apple 1990:ix-x). The result of which is that the aim and content of the school curriculum change in accordance with *shifts in the balance of power* between the groups struggling for power, while shifts in the balance of power are to a large extent dependent upon the changing social consciousness (or paradigm of truth).

Underlying most contemporary demands on curricular knowledge, therefore, is the notion that the school curriculum is an entity of which the "limits are not given or fixed, but produced through the conflicting actions and interests of man in history" (Young quoted in Goodson 1983:391). Hence, to be able to understand any system or pattern related to the school curriculum and the struggle for power in educational and philosophical terms, the problem we are faced with is that "if we are to take shifts in the content of education seriously, then we require histories of these contents, and their relationships to institutions and symbolic arrangements external to the school" (Bernstein quoted in Goodson 1983:391). The implication is that, in any philosophical reflection on the relationship between the school curriculum and the struggle for power, both the history of education and its social context need to be taken into account.

In South Africa the research done by Du Toit (1984) and Roodt (1993) has revealed that, although much is said and written about power and the curriculum, as well as about the demands of various power groups on the

school curriculum, it is evident that there is a lack of philosophical research specifically focusing on an educationally acceptable relationship between the school curriculum and demands in the struggle for knowledge power. Hence a better understanding of the character of such a relationship, especially from a South African point of view, seems to be essential.

Consequently, to meet this challenge, some of the issues that will have to be explored in this study will be:

- Why is the school curriculum part of the power struggle?
- Is it possible to discern (present and past) trends in demands on the curriculum?
- What is a school curriculum?
- What is knowledge?
- What is the power of knowledge?
- Is there any truth in claims that, in certain instances, the traditional power structure, prevalent in present school curricula, is discriminatory?

These questions cannot be considered or resolved in educational philosophical terms without outlining and reflecting on

- historical and current views on "truth" (or the power of knowledge),
- whether (and how) the accent in demands made by power struggles (on the school curriculum) is influenced by the social reality, as well as
- how certain power groups struggling for knowledge power justify (or perceive) their aims in the social reality in which they are operating.

As demands stemming from the struggle for power is a recurring feature of communities throughout the world, inquiry into all the above-mentioned will be, although not in great depth, sufficient for the elucidation of the theme under discussion (*i.e.* the *relationship* between the school curriculum and the demands arising out of the struggle for power).

Likewise, power struggles will be chosen for their relevance to this theme, while examples of criticism and demands on the school curriculum will be taken at random from Western-oriented societies whenever appropriate or relevant to the specific struggle for knowledge power under discussion.

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The selection of power struggles will, however, be made in terms of the *focus of their demands in a particular social reality* and will be limited to: Feminism, the Gay movement, People's Education, the economy and the environment (or Green movement).

These five power struggles have been selected on the belief that their demands on the school curriculum are representative of the *most important accents* in the prevailing challenge to the dominant Western-oriented interpretation of truth (with its main roots in the growing importance of science and the economy as determinants of both "life-chances" and "identity"). The demands of these power struggles on the school curriculum are furthermore assumed to be indicative of a broader crisis: the crisis of power that the modern (as distinct from the classic or medieval) Western cultural ideal is experiencing insofar as the accent in most of these demands is on breaking down certain discriminatory "divisions" perceived to be evident in curricular knowledge because it is a reflection of the "oppressive" balance of power in the traditional Western cultural ideal. That is why the focus in this study will not be on the power struggles as such, but on demands that will provide illustrations in the quest for philosophical reflection on the *relationship* between the struggle for power and the school curriculum.

1.4 HYPOTHESIS

The hypothetical point of departure is that the relationship between the school curriculum and the struggle for power is not necessarily educationally unacceptable.

The following specific hypotheses are also put forward:

- Logically there should be some sort of relationship between the school curriculum and any struggle for power as the activities of both of these always have in mind the desire to influence people and the desire to shape their minds in accordance with the future in a preconceived social reality.
- The relationship between the school curriculum and the struggle for power is closely related to perceptions of the authority which

"legitimises" the origin or truth of knowledge (and the corresponding balance of power in the social reality).

- The school curriculum is widely considered to be a powerful agent exercising great influence on school children and this may give rise to non-educational claims on the school curriculum.
- The educational acceptability of the relationship between the school curriculum and the struggle for (knowledge) power will always be problematical in terms of varying cultural ideals and changing social realities.
- It should be possible to identify (obvious) educationally unacceptable characteristics or qualities in the relationship between demands on the school curriculum and the struggle for power in any particular social reality.

1.5 AIM OF THIS RESEARCH

Taking into account the complexity of the problem as outlined in Chapter 1.3 above, the aim of this study is to clarify our thinking about the relationship between power and the school curriculum from the perspective of the history and philosophy of education. In other words, to come to a better (fresh) understanding of the relationship between the school curriculum and demands for knowledge power, a relationship not usually discerned by unreflective common sense. The objectives arising out of this are

- to come to terms with the changing aims of education and therefore the aim (and the content) of the modern school curriculum;
- to explore the effect of external cultural influences, influences outside the school curriculum as such, on the relationship between the school curriculum and demands for knowledge power;
- to explore the link between the authority which legitimises knowledge outside the curriculum (closely linked to the theoretical framework -

or paradigm of truth - underlying the prevailing philosophy(ies) of knowledge at any particular time) and demands in the struggle to justify or challenge the prevailing balance of power in the social reality;

- to identify, if possible, which power(s) over a school curriculum cannot be avoided and can therefore be considered as educationally acceptable;
- to identify and describe certain "criteria" which may be used to "evaluate" existing relationships (notwithstanding the fact that the "criteria" as well as the "evaluation" may be susceptible to a certain degree of subjective interpretation and fully comprehending that evaluation as such might be controversial);
- to determine whether specific demands of the power struggles on curriculum can be accommodated on educational grounds; and, eventually
- to arrive at answers which may provide useful guidelines in the formulation of the conclusions and recommendations of this research and, if possible, contribute towards freeing the school curriculum from educationally unacceptable demands in any approach towards a "new" relationship between the school curriculum and demands from pressure groups struggling for knowledge power in any particular social reality.

1.6 METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH

In an effort to aid philosophical reflection on the relationship between the school curriculum and demands in the struggle for power, research of the past (the *historical method*) has been done with the aid of an extensive literature study, including mostly secondary, though also primary, sources from all over the world. In addition, information has been gleaned at conferences, seminars, symposia and from relevant personal interviews.

In an effort to gain understanding of the *relationship* between the struggle for power and the school curriculum - and in the light of the

vastness of this field of research - use has been made of *selected examples*. These examples, having been selected in such a way that they provide a focus on the most important trends in the prevailing demands on the school curriculum, are presented in terms of *descriptive research*.

Moreover, in an effort to gain an understanding of the relationship between demands on the school curriculum and the struggle for power in a particular social reality, use will be made of *interpretive research*. Finally, in order to use this information to arrive at answers that can be accounted for in educational philosophical terms, an attempt at the *evaluation* of the relationship between the school curriculum and the struggle for power - as it is manifest in the demands of each of the selected samples - will be made.

1.7 CHAPTER DELINEATION

While **Chapter 1** is a short general orientation, **Chapter 2** will give a brief overview of the current issues addressed by the power struggle as well as the historical background of the power struggle.

The focus in **Chapter 3** is on the nature of a curriculum, the nature of knowledge and the concept of knowledge as power.

In **Chapter 4** attention will be given to examples of demands in the struggle for knowledge power by Feminism, the Gay movement and People's Education, while **Chapter 5** will take a look at the demands of the economy and the environment on the school curriculum: the way these struggles and demands are being enacted in Western-oriented societies serve to illustrate (and are described as) a perceived manifestation of the crisis that surrounds the roots upon which modern Western culture (knowledge) has been resting since the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution.

An attempt at the educational evaluation of the various demands on the school curriculum, as described in Chapters 4 and 5, will be made in **Chapter 6**, while **Chapter 7** will provide a brief summarising of the conclusions and recommendations of this study.

CHAPTER 2

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE CONTROVERSY: KNOWLEDGE AND POWER

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the focus will be on how the struggle for knowledge power has given rise to concern with the power structure (or balance of power) evident in the school curriculum, especially in countries (like South Africa) in which curricular knowledge has a *Western cultural bias*.

In the *first* place, attention will be focused on the main trends in the increasingly critical stance against the power structure prevalent in Western-oriented school curricula. In the *second* place, attention will be given to the changing social reality, and its effect on the changing – and often opposing – views about the power of knowledge, which have been central to philosophical thinking about the *authority of truth* in Western-oriented societies throughout the ages. Outlining the history of ideas relevant to the relationship between demands on the school curriculum and the struggle for power will highlight some of the diverse external influences on the development of the controversy regarding knowledge and power and, at the same time, place the struggle to secure control of (all or part of) the school curriculum in *historical perspective*.

2.2 CURRENT ISSUES IN THE POWER STRUGGLE AFFECTING THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM

In any struggle for power – and for a variety of reasons – there are pressure groups struggling to maintain (or justify) the *status quo*, and pressure groups struggling to effect changes in (or challenge) the prevailing balance of power in society. In her introduction to a series of articles on curriculum reform in 1990 Linda McNeil (Cohen 1990:518) writes that "the curriculum has gone public. We are in a watershed period of intense public debate over what should be taught in schools".

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Although one can disagree with this statement to the effect that demands on the curriculum has been controversial since the inception of public education, it serves to highlight the fact that the present controversies are more "public" in the sense that themes central to these controversies cover a wide social arena, are closely related to power in public life and are conducted, to a large extent, in and through public media. In addition, the many contenders struggling for control of all or part of the school curriculum include social pressure groups, the government, the community, parents, teachers, students, the private sector, the economy and the natural environment (or ecology).

Meanwhile the latter part of the twentieth century – mainly as a result of widespread disenchantment with existing power structures after two world wars – has, in most Western-oriented societies, been characterised by an increased interest in the social context of knowledge. This has brought in its wake a fascination with the interrelatedness of community, school curriculum and social control, especially from neo-Marxist and critical perspectives. Hence, the central position of the school curriculum in the struggle to gain knowledge power is the result of the conceptualisation of the "curriculum as an instrument for social control" (Gundem 1994:1303). This, in turn, has stimulated an interest in the power relations – or the so-called "regimes of truth" as producers of knowledge – evident in the school curriculum (Chetty 1992/93:107).

Related to this is the fact that "the many new voices" that publicly take part in the debate about the curriculum, "do not necessarily reflect a newfound enthusiasm for knowledge" but that "many issues in education that once seemed primarily professional now seem primarily political (Cohen 1990:520). For, as Michel Foucault (1986:212) points out, it is the status of the individual in the balance of power that is being questioned. Demands in the power struggle is not for or against the "individual" but against the "government of individualization"; against the "mystifying representations imposed on people"; against "the effects of power which are linked with knowledge, competence, and qualification"; in other words, against "the privileges of knowledge" in the power structure in society (Foucault 1986:212). Fundamentally the

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issue is not the "dogmatic belief in the value of scientific knowledge" nor "a skeptical or relativistic refusal of all verified truth"; the important issues are "*the way in which knowledge circulates and functions*" and "*its relations to power*" (Foucault 1986:212; italics added by this author). Foucault comes to the conclusion that, what comes to the fore in these demands are not opposition to "such or such an institution of power, or group, or elite, or class", but rather opposition to "a technique" or "a form of power" which is clearly discerned in the knowledge content of the school curriculum (Foucault 1986:212). There is a dawning realisation that not only power at the top is important or effective; also power "at the margins" is important and can be used effectively in the struggle for knowledge power – provided the demands are supported by group action (Deacon & Parker 1993:136).

How closely the "power" aspect, common to most current issues affecting the school curriculum, is related to perceived "imbalances" in the prevailing balance of power in society is perhaps best mirrored by the following idea put forward in 1977: "Much criticism of education is born of an impossible dream. Schools [and the curriculum] have become the victims of what Adlai Stevenson had called the 'revolution of rising expectations'. Simply stated we have expected our schools to reform society – but very often society does not wish to be reformed outside schools" (Wynn, De Young & Wynn 1977:34).

This aspect of the power struggle is also emphasised by Per Dalin (1978:14) in *The Limits of Educational Change* when he says: "The types of innovation and change at a given point in time reflect social and economic forces to a large extent ... although not necessarily a change in the mood or in the forces of society at large". One cannot but agree with Dalin's further statement that any group that has had specific advantages in any social system, although they will tend to defend "traditional values ... are possibly more threatened by the redistribution of power which is implicit in ... [the] reorganisation" of the balance of power in society (Dalin 1978:26).

Both these ideas are important. Consequently it is not coincidental that "post-modern" philosophical thinking (in its stand against "modern" philosophical thinking) has been influencing the accent in demands on

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the school curriculum extensively. The following extract clearly illustrates why so-called post-modern thinking is having such an impact on the struggle for knowledge power: "If postmodernism means ... opening up to critical discourse the line of enquiry which were formerly prohibited ... so that new and different questions can be asked and new and other voices can be asking them; if it means the opening up of ... social and sexual identities ... if it means the erosion of triangular formations of power and knowledge with the expert at the apex and the 'masses' at the base, if, in a word, it enhances our collective (and democratic) sense of possibility, then I for one am a postmodernist" (Hebdige quoted in Giroux 1991b:16).

2.2.1 ACCENTS IN THE PREVAILING CRITICISM OF THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM

What follows is an attempt to touch on the emphases in the comments and arguments of those who criticise the Western-oriented school curriculum mainly because it reflects the dominant power structure in society – recurrently perceived as discriminatory. The principal focus will be on points of view in the neo-Marxist and critical traditions which have been instrumental in opening up and intensifying this debate.

Henry Giroux (1991a:14), for example, argues that curricula should return to their primary task "of critical education in the service of creating a public sphere of citizens who are able to exercise power over their own lives, and especially over the conditions of knowledge production and acquisition". However, Shaul (1983:15), in his Foreword to *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, touches on what seems to be the crux of the controversy about demands on the school curriculum and the struggle for power when he says: "There is no such thing as a *neutral* educational process".

Also Paolo Freire (Shaul 1983:15), whose ideas proved to have far-reaching effects on critical and conservative thinking about knowledge and power in the school curriculum, maintains that curricular knowledge is a subversive force and that knowledge can never be neutral. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* – originally written in Portuguese in 1968 – Paolo Freire (1983:64) explains that, to him, the oppression evident in

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the school curriculum is the result of the "overwhelming control" of curricular knowledge. Like so many before him he wants knowledge in the school curriculum to be a tool by which the oppressed can regain their "humanity" and "liberate themselves" from the oppressors "who oppress, exploit, and rape by virtue of their power" to control the knowledge production processes (Freire 1983:33). He does not make it quite clear whether by "regaining humanity" he means that society will be "free" from "power" altogether. An important point that he makes, though, is that "no pedagogy which is truly liberating can remain distant from the oppressed by treating them as unfortunates" in the balance of power in any social reality (Freire 1983:39).

According to Freire (1983:58) knowledge is *praxis*; knowledge is possible only when there is active involvement or active dialogue. Therefore the traditional teaching method, in which the child, as Njobe (1990:4) describes it, has "to echo what ... teachers" teach, turns scholars "into 'containers', into 'receptacles' to be 'filled' by the teacher" as the possessor of truth; "education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor" (Freire 1983:58). This he calls the "banking" system in which, "in the last analysis, it is men themselves who are filed away through the lack of creativity, transformation, and knowledge in this (at best) misguided system". Freire (1983:62) argues that the banking system serves the interests of an oppressive social power structure which does not take into account the humanness of people. He furthermore stresses (Freire 1983:144) that manipulation is an important ingredient of power and that, in their effort "to conform the masses to their objectives", the school curriculum is used as "an instrument of conquest" (or as an instrument of oppression) by "the dominant elites"; that "implicit in the banking concept" is "the assumption" that man is "an empty 'mind' passively open to the reception of deposits of reality from the world outside" (Freire 1983:62). However, Freire (1983:146) makes two important observations which need to be mentioned. The *first* is that "the greater the political immaturity of these people (rural or urban) the more easily the latter can be manipulated by those who do not wish to lose their power". The *second* important observation is that manipulation can be achieved by a series of myths, which, "like the conquest whose objectives it serves, attempts to anesthetize the people

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so they will not think". However, the wisdom of both these insights is applicable to any struggle for power.

Another writer whose work has been prominent in the field of power and knowledge, is Michael W. Apple. In an article in 1991, he claims that the question: "What knowledge is of most worth?" – first asked by Herbert Spencer more than 100 years ago – has to be re-phrased "since the conflicts about what should be taught" is part of the broader social and cultural struggle for power (Apple 1991:40). Because the continuing conflicts about what we should teach are closely related to religious, class, race, gender and economic struggles to gain access to power structures in society, a better way of phrasing Spencer's question, a way that highlights the profoundly political nature of education, is "Whose knowledge is of most worth?" Apple (1991:40) continues by saying that these controversies "have made the curriculum into what can best be described as a political football" in the struggle to maintain or change the balance of power in society. He (Apple 1991:41) draws attention to the fact that any decision to define some groups' knowledge as "official," as worthwhile to pass on to future generations, while "other groups' culture and history hardly see the light of day in our curricula, says something extremely important about who has the power in society". For Apple (1991:49) it is essential that democracy will have to be enhanced "at the grass roots" and that new ways will have to be created to link "people outside and inside the school". The school curriculum should not be seen as alien, but as "embodying" the prevailing balance of power in society and, therefore, as "integrally linked to the political, cultural, and economic experiences of people in their everyday lives" (Apple 1991:49).

Also in the work of Thomas Popkewitz power is a central concern. In *A Political Sociology of Educational Reform* Popkewitz (1991:37) holds that the power that underlies "the ability to assign and reassign meaning and practice to components of social affairs" – in other words the processes of control – can be seen as twofold, both of which are reflected in the school curriculum. In the *first* place, power means the way in which the importance of the state and the interests of certain "social actors" give "direction to current practices": the way in which knowledge in the school curriculum reflects "who rules and how that

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rule is exercised". The *second* meaning of power is a reversal of "this notion of sovereignty". The focus is on "the choice of one set of practices over its alternative as a component in the production of identity"; on the way in which the construction of "identity" binds the individual to a specific position in the power structure in society. The result is that "power is found in the depths of activities" and of knowledge "that are *not* political in the sense that they belong to the government or ruling elites". Popkewitz (1991:37) explicitly states that power is part of everyday life and that even "school reform is a history of the changing relations of the nexus knowledge/power that ties individuals to problems of governance"; and, that the study of demands for curricular reform will reveal the particular problems of knowledge and power evident in the wider society and the government.

This poses the problem of knowledge not being absolute, but being influenced by the social setting, which Whitty (1985:14) describes as follows: "Certainly some aspects of the way in which curriculum knowledge is constructed, selected, organized, represented and distributed are by no means absolute or beyond the realm of social action or change, therefore, to a certain extent, relativization should not be seen as a statement of an epistemological position, rather as a way of challenging our assumptions about the seemingly absolute status of knowledge which has come to be institutionalized in the school curriculum".

A meaningful overview of the South African scene is given by Nazir Carrim and Yusuf Sayed (1992/93:22) when, in *Perspectives in Education*, they say that "surfacing trends [in the demands on the school curriculum] in South Africa are not solely the result of local changes" in the social reality. They point out that global events and developments have had a major impact on the perceived role of the school curriculum in power struggles and "have highlighted two closely related phenomena for South Africa". *Firstly*, the danger that a school curriculum too closely aligned to the political ideals of a government may lead to "losing the favour of the people". *Secondly*, that the school curriculum should play a part in "the need to deepen democracy beyond formal parliamentary party democracy, particularly in civil society", by acknowledging demands from "new social movements" which

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include "gay rights movements, third world solidarity groups, black rights movements, women's movements, ecology movements and the like". For Carrim and Sayed (1992/93:23) the significance of these social movements (in the struggle to control curricular knowledge) is measured in terms of their power to "challenge and pressurise the state because of their civil society strengths, irrespective of their political orientations"; the implication is that, because they are strong, they can challenge the prevailing balance of power in society with demands focusing on "very particular ... [discriminatory] issues".

Both Nick Taylor (1993:1,8) and W.G. Knill touch on important accents in demands on the school curriculum stemming from the controversy about knowledge and power in Western societies. In "Issues in the production of knowledge" Taylor (1993:1,8) points out that, in South Africa, "a critical shift among curriculum theorists" has resulted in changing the accent from "What knowledge is of most worth?" to that of "Whose knowledge is legitimised?". Knill's (1992:127) argument in *The Green Paradigm* is that science is a "social product" and, hence, that the power associated with scientific knowledge in the social consciousness is contestable.

M.W. Njobe (1990), in *Education for Liberation*, briefly gives attention to a South African curriculum which will serve the needs of liberation. The perception is that this type of curriculum would have to focus on "the *real* as against the imagined needs of the society" (Njobe 1990:63) and "must grow out of the cultural experience of the society" (Njobe 1990:59). One could, however, remark that the definition of "*real* needs" in terms of "the cultural experience of society" may prove to be problematic; particularly if the two following (somewhat contradictory) statements of his are taken into consideration. Initially Njobe stresses that the "*transfer of political power* is an indispensable pre-requisite to liberation" (Njobe 1990:51; italics added by this author), while he later states that the liberated curriculum "should be *free from prejudice* such as relate to differences in race, sex and religion" (Njobe 1990:54; italics added by this author).

The situation in South Africa, according to Hofmeyer and Moulder (Grebe 1991:131) is that education "with its heavy academic bias, its Eurocentric curricula, and its emphasis on rote learning, is flawed and irrelevant

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for [the balance of power in] the South Africa of the future". They plead for a curriculum which "will meet the aspirations of all its people and work for the country as a whole" in terms of a more "democratic" power structure in culture and economy. According to Chetty (1992/93:108), however, a crucial question, that remains to be answered about any "newly" selected curriculum, will always be whether it aims at democracy, social usefulness or the authority of a new "regime of truth" (in other words a new balance of power in society).

It is clear that, although the same controversies are being enacted in more than one country at the same time, demands on some issues in the struggle for knowledge power have only just started gaining momentum in South Africa. The result is that educational philosophical research done in South Africa (on the relationship between the focus of demands in the struggle for power and knowledge in the school curriculum) is neither as extensive nor as thorough as in countries like the USA, Britain or the more developed countries in Europe.

2.3 POWER AND KNOWLEDGE IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE: ACCENTS IN SOCIETY, PHILOSOPHY, THEORIES OF KNOWLEDGE AND THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM

In simple terms the aim of philosophy is the search for the ultimate truth – or knowledge that has "power" – while a theory of knowledge may be described as the study of the nature and legitimacy of knowledge as well as the extent to which knowledge is possible (Van der Westhuizen 1978:5).

What is important is that a prevailing social order may have an effect on the power ascribed to knowledge. Knowledge deemed "important" in one social reality does not necessarily have the same significance in another. It is therefore necessary to place the power crisis – or the changing emphases in the legitimation of knowledge in terms of man himself, God, or the world in which man lives – in historical perspective. Although, at different times and in different places, certain trends in the power (or social legitimation) of knowledge may be clearly discernible, it is important to remember, as Kuhn (1968) stated in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, that more than one theory (or "paradigm of truth") can exist at the same time.

Chapter 2: Brief overview of the controversy: knowledge and power 20**2.3.1 THE CLASSIC GREEK AGE (\pm 750–350 BC): REASON AND KNOWLEDGE**

Much of the prevailing Western educational thought and educational practices have been influenced, in some way or another, by the educational thought and practices of Ancient Greece. In the earliest works that have survived we find that the important city states of *Sparta* and *Athens*, while not sharing a common goal and values, did not regard the same knowledge as important (powerful or the "truth"). Hence the balance of power in society was interpreted in *two opposing ways* (The Guinness Encyclopedia 1990:488). In each case the Greek ideal, of individual excellence for public usefulness, was interpreted in terms of "relevant" knowledge insofar as such knowledge was perceived to be an "important" prerequisite for establishing and maintaining the balance of power perceived to be vital for the survival of each specific community.

2.3.1.1 THE SPARTANS

The Spartans were a warring nation. Power for them meant conquering their opponents. In the social consciousness this gave rise to a perception that greatness could be attained by developing a strong body in the interest of a state for which loyalty and service to the state was of the utmost importance (Power 1970:34). The focus of this demand on education affected the way the Greek ideal of good citizenship (in other words the desired balance of power) was translated into the Spartan educational ideal.

The state had absolute authority; this meant the power to control the knowledge transmitted in Spartan schools, to select knowledge "relevant" to the explicit needs of the state. Consequently men were not permitted to stay at home, while girls, whose primary function it was to produce future Spartan soldiers, had to stay at home where they were initiated into their domestic roles (Steyn 1982:7). Because a strong body and not individual intellect was important, knowledge in the curriculum stressed the development of the man of action and not the man of wisdom (Lewis 1992:7). In the effort to "secure the national interest", built on an "ideal of absolute patriotic devotion to the state" (Guttek 1972:23), only knowledge pertinent to patriotism and military

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efficiency was important. The result was a curriculum that served the balance of power in a society in which the worth of the individual was not acknowledged (Steyn 1982:37). Nevertheless, by keeping students isolated from foreign ideas and ignoring changing values, the balance of power in society and the power of the knowledge sanctioned by the state, remained unchallenged and a "high degree of community consensus and social stability" was achieved (Gutek 1972:23; Lewis 1992:9).

2.3.1.2 THE ATHENIANS

Diametrically opposed to the Spartan approach was the ideal of Athenian education with its stress on a *balance* between body and mind as well as on a democratic power structure in civil society. However, in terms of the prevailing social consciousness, democracy meant education for all Greek male citizens – not for slaves, foreigners, or girls (Lewis 1992:15). No attention was given to vocational and domestic training – power was not associated with this type of knowledge as these duties were performed by slaves and foreigners.

For the Athenians the power of knowledge was closely related to wisdom which was deemed important in maintaining a democratic balance of power in society. Because "important" knowledge was, therefore, associated with the total development of body and mind for active participation in affairs of the state during peace and war, curricular knowledge was selected and organised in terms of being "relevant" to the ultimate purpose of making men more human and preparing them to be wise in executing their right to think for themselves: the wisdom to be able to guide one's own destiny and take part in a wide range of cultural activities (Power 1970:43). Hence the accent in the school curriculum was on what became known in Western educational thought as the "seven liberal arts": a combination of the *Trivium* (grammar, dialectics and rhetoric) and the *Quadrivium* (arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music) (Lewis 1992:10).

After a change in fortune, Athens developed into an industrial and commercial centre which brought in its wake many political, economic and social changes. The established community structure, which had

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been the strength of earlier Athens, gave way to diversity. At the same time, because of a change in the social consciousness, greatness was no longer measured in terms of wisdom (which had been a prerequisite for the traditional balance of power in society) but in terms of wealth and social power. This produced a new spirit of individualism which led to criticism of the prevailing power structure in society and gave rise to changes in the focus of new demands on the traditional educational curriculum and practices (Wilds & Lottich 1961:71; Power 1970:70).

Although traditionalists were alarmed when the existing curriculum was challenged by these new demands, a group of teachers – known as the Sophists – succeeded in adapting the curriculum and setting up "a new sanction for human conduct to replace the old external authorities of tradition such as family, caste, gods, or state. The new authority was the individual himself" (Wilds & Lottich 1961:71). For the Sophists it was not important to search for the ultimate truth, some of them even maintained that there was no ultimate truth or absolute standards of morality. They argued that what people considered right or wrong was determined by those in power. Hence the school course was shortened and the new goal of school learning was skilful oratory. When skilful oratory popularly came to be seen as equal to political virtue (or moral wisdom), the philosopher-teachers warned that without traditional individual and social values the new curricular knowledge could be dangerous and superficial; political virtue was not synonymous to effective speaking (Power 1970:71). Nevertheless, in accordance with a change in the social consciousness, this knowledge was in great demand and the content of the curriculum was changed so that schools became literary institutions. The outcome of this perceptual change was that the curriculum came to be regarded as a tool for social assimilation; as a tool to prepare – or empower – students "to take advantage of their newly found freedom of political action"; as a tool in the struggle to establish a new balance of power in society (Power 1970:71).

Consequently, the struggle for knowledge power resulted in two completely different types of school curricula in Athens. In the *rhetorical school*, associated with Isocrates (and the Sophists), knowledge was selected to prepare students for active political careers

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and to give them power over others by virtue of their ability to persuade people; hence the importance of language and rhetoric (Collier's Encyclopedia (8) 1966:559).

It was in reaction to the *revolutionary views* of the Sophists that the three classic Greek philosophers developed their theories about knowledge and power in education. Socrates (c.470 – 399 BC), who was in constant battle with the Sophists because they were regarded as "rebels against the established code of life" (Collier's Encyclopedia (18) 1966:705), did not agree with them that all knowledge and moral standards (right and wrong) are relative, or that justice is self-interest and can be attained by the art of oratory which gives one power over others. Socrates believes that truth is absolute and objective, that the existence of truth is independent of man, that knowledge is the result of insight and dependent on reason, and that the correct method will lead to the truth (Van der Walt 1977:26). Because right or wrong, besides being a matter of opinion, is a matter of fact too, the question of right and wrong is quite independent of what one would like to believe, or of one's persuasive powers (Collier's Encyclopedia (18) 1966:705). Socrates maintains that doing the right thing is essentially knowing the right thing to do and that, therefore, knowledge about right and wrong should be included in the school curriculum. He furthermore stresses that morality can only be taught by virtue of man's rational faculty and that, in this, the teacher has to play his part (Van der Walt 1977:28). The good teacher, however, "does not indoctrinate but elicits" the student's "own conceptions" (Collier's Encyclopedia (18) 1966:705).

Plato (c.427–347 BC) maintained that knowledge – the ultimate truth or that which lies behind reality – can only be the result of the intellect and of reason; that only ideas are real and that all other things reflect ideas. Change, which is part of our everyday world, does not affect reality (or true knowledge), which belongs to the unchanging world of Forms (Van der Walt 1977:47). Basic to all knowledge is that "nature (reality) is a realm of law and order" (Collier's Encyclopedia (18) 1966:705) and that the fixed and unifying element in reality is structure. Hence the aim of the school curriculum, according to Plato, is education for the social office (rulers, soldiers and workers) for which each

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individual is best suited. In this way the school curriculum will be instrumental in developing both the individual and the community and, at the same time, serve the balance of power perceived to be important in the ideal state (Lewis 1992:16).

Aristotle (348-322 BC) stated that "knowing must not be confused with making" (Collier's Encyclopedia (2) 1966:610). To know means to have the ability to discern and to assimilate something "that already physically exists, precisely as it is" (Collier's Encyclopedia (2) 1966:610). It is this theoretical understanding of all things – or knowledge – that gives man the power of reason or wisdom (Van der Westhuizen 1978:10). Possibly the most famous of Aristotle's propositions is that man is a social animal. Consequently Aristotle is in favour of a liberal (and not a vocational or utilitarian) education; in other words, a school curriculum that will enable each individual to execute all his actions with reason and will, at the same time, warrant a democratic balance of power in society (Lewis 1992:16-17; The World Book Encyclopedia (15) 1975:349).

In classic Greek philosophy the focus is on the fact that the criteria for knowledge which is good, and therefore powerful, can be judged by man himself in terms of reason (The World Book Encyclopedia (15) 1975:349); reason which also provides man with power insofar as it enables him to rise above human passions and is, therefore, crucial in maintaining a democratic balance of power in a stable society. Hence the curriculum of the *philosophical school*, with which Socrates, Plato and Aristotle were associated, was selected to suit a life of contemplation; in preparation of practical and wise leadership since "philosophers should be kings" (and curricular knowledge instrumental in attaining the ideal of a democratic balance of power in a civilised and just society).

2.3.2 THE MIDDLE AGES: RELIGION AND KNOWLEDGE

2.3.2.1 RELIGIOUS UNITY

The social reality in the Middle Ages was dominated by a striving towards the ideal of eternal life in terms of the *will of God*. Because God was regarded to be above man and the world and to have absolute power over life and death, God was regarded as the *only source of true*

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knowledge. This meant that the Church, as the guardian and executor of God's will, was also synonymous with the state. Because the "demand" of religion is to know God's will, those who knew God's will, in other words those who had access to religious knowledge, were in a position of power. Possession of such knowledge (in terms of depth and breadth) determined, to a large extent, the position of the individual in the social hierarchy (or the balance of power) characteristic of medieval society. This meant that church leaders – by virtue of their "superior" knowledge of God's will – were also the social leaders and in control of the destiny of ordinary men with less knowledge. It follows, too, that possession of *religious knowledge* could be instrumental in the *power to control a society* which is deeply religious.

During the Middle Ages the focus of demands on school education was on the transmission of knowledge of God's will and of Christian belief. Because religion permeated everyday life, the school was used as an agency for Christian salvation while at the same time there was a distrust of too much learning which could take the focus away from God (Power 1970:202). In early Christian times, simple instruction was provided in "catechumenical schools" to prepare converts for membership in the Church. More advanced education was provided mostly to train leaders and teachers. But, in order to meet the increasing need for clergymen in the Church, "bishop's schools" or "cathedral schools" were established (Collier's Encyclopedia (5) 1966:560). At the same time monasteries were established for those who thought that true Christianity required complete withdrawal from worldly affairs. This required "monastic schools" for those who wished to become monks (Collier's Encyclopedia (8) 1966:561). The demand on school curricula, therefore, was to provide education for Christian leaders insofar as this was important for maintaining the desired balance of power (in terms of social ideals that were dominated by the needs of religion) in medieval society.

However, towards the end of the Middle Ages, Scholasticism, associated with St Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) one of the great thinkers of this time, advocated a process of logical thinking to show that the doctrines of the Church were consistent with reason (Collier's Encyclopedia (8) 1966:561). Influenced by the Aristotlean idea that knowledge is part of

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an overall system, Aquinas maintained that the basis for the organisation of the world (reality) was reason; that knowledge of the universe would lead to God and that the aim of education was eternal life and not happiness on earth. In his career as a teacher, and owing to his *revolutionary ideas* about reason and religion, Aquinas was involved "in every great intellectual conflict of the time" (Hutchins 1971:v). Religious leaders, however, did not accept the criterion of reason for religious truths. As a consequence philosophy, which had become dependent on reason, was separated from theology (Collier's Encyclopedia (2) 1966:374). This was the beginning of a *change of consciousness*: religious knowledge, which had dominated the balance of power in the Middle Ages, was losing its universal credibility and the possessors of religious knowledge were losing their absolute social power.

2.3.2.2 THE REFORMATION AND THE COUNTER-REFORMATION

The decline in the power of religious knowledge to determine the social status of people, took the focus away from the patriarchal pattern of the "divine right of kings"; away from a balance of power in which a subject owed total political obligation to a ruler who could legitimise his claim of being the absolute authority on truth (knowledge) in terms of a divine grant of power. Church and state were separated and Church influence on curricular knowledge declined. These signs of secularisation coincided with a renewed interest in the past (in the Classic Age and in Greek and Roman literature) and in striving towards a more democratic balance of power in society.

While the *absolute power* of the Catholic Church was being *challenged* by the Reformation (which was started by Martin Luther in 1517), there was a strong Protestant movement to gain control of the knowledge transmitted in schools. The accent in the demands of the Reformation on the school curriculum was on using curricular knowledge as a tool to propagate the ideals of the Reformation. The Reformation implemented a school curriculum that included knowledge for the education of future leaders (the elite), as well as knowledge that would enable as many people as possible to read the Bible in their mother tongue – in order to resist the Catholic domination of access to religious knowledge – and free ordinary people from social control by the Catholic Church.

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Meanwhile, in *reaction* to the Reformation, the Jesuit Order established many secondary schools in which the Catholic ideals as well the classical curriculum received attention. As the *RATIO STUDIORUM* explicitly states, the aim of the Jesuit curriculum was to gain complete control of the hearts and minds of students so that they would be good Catholics and, hence, would serve the Catholic cause (Coetzee 1992:39,45).

However, because of a change in the social consciousness, the accent in the curriculum was on the study of grammar and literature; knowledge of the classics – Greek and Roman literature – had come to be associated with greatness and access to the power structures in society. While the influence of religion was such that the aim of the curriculum was both literary and religious (*pietas litterata*) (Collier's Encyclopedia (8) 1966:561), there was an increasing awareness of the worth of the individual. Furthermore, although many schools were still under control of churches, the curriculum came to be associated with the needs of the state as well. The result was that, as religious knowledge lost its importance in the social power structure, the state supplanted the Church as the most powerful determinant of the balance of power in society. The important question now arose as to whether the Church or the state should control the school curriculum (Power 1970:379). Nonetheless, at the same time that social control went over into the hands of the state, the state acquired the power to control the school curriculum.

2.3.3 THE MODERN AGE (ENLIGHTENMENT): REALITY AND KNOWLEDGE

The seventeenth century, which was also the beginning of the modern age, was characterised by a major conceptual change and a significant *shift* in the balance of power in society. According to Nancy Murphy (1990:292) *three central assumptions* have dominated modern thinking and, as such, provide the *framework* for the balance of power inherent in the modern *Western cultural ideal*. *Firstly*, "that knowledge can only be justified by reconstructing it upon indubitable 'foundational' beliefs". *Secondly*, "that language must gain its primary meaning by representing objects or facts to which it refers" and, *thirdly*, by "an approach to ethics and political philosophy that takes the individual to be prior to the community".

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The one single factor that was to have the greatest influence on modern societal patterns, philosophical thought, educational practices and school curricula, was the expansion of the natural sciences – and the ensuing interest in commerce, economics and politics – which was instrumental in changing the perceptions about the relationship of the individual to his spiritual and natural environment. While greatness and knowledge of classical texts had been closely related in the social consciousness, sufficient literary and linguistic skills had been seen as the only way to gain possession of important knowledge and, likewise, access to the power structure in society. The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (which was a period of great intellectual activity) brought a major *change in the social consciousness*: the power of knowledge increasingly came to be associated with the present, with reality and with science. Hence, the focus of the new demand on the school curriculum was knowledge and skills that would enable the student to understand nature in order to gain control of it for his own material and social benefit. In other words, demands on the curriculum were aimed at establishing a "new" balance of power in keeping with changes in the social reality: a balance of power aimed at freeing man from the "traditional" shackles of domination – the possessors of classical knowledge – by his own effort and with the help of science (Collier's Encyclopedia (18) 1966:713; The Guinness Encyclopedia 1990:488).

2.3.3.1 SCIENCE AND THE ACCENT ON RATIONALISM AND EMPIRICISM

For a long time religious knowledge had been powerful insofar as it had been instrumental in determining the position of the individual in the social hierarchy. However, as a result of the interest in reality during the seventeenth century there was a *radical shift* from the supernatural to the natural as the determinant of man's "place" in the universe.

As reality increasingly took precedence over an ideal in the social consciousness, reason (or rationalism: derived from the Latin *ratio* which means reason) came to be associated with the source of knowledge (or truth) and, consequently, with the potential to change the balance of power in society (Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion 1980:476). Fundamental to rationalism is that reason, which is more important than experience as a source of knowledge, has to be developed in order to

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grasp the "essence" or laws of things. René Descartes (1596–1650) favoured the mathematical method for obtaining universal laws about the external world and, because he believed the human mind could be trained to use this method, his theory of knowledge pointed to a school curriculum in which the development of reason was important. Descartes believed that it was possible for man to know (and control) this world provided he had the proper means – sufficient knowledge and his rational faculty – to do so (Power 1970:417). Therefore it is in *cogito ergo sum* (I think, therefore I am) that the power of the individual is enclosed. This belief in the essential freedom of man to think for himself, in spite of the supremacy of God, had a great influence on the British (English) social system in which political freedom, science, philosophy and religion all came to be part of a balance of power in such a way that they could all thrive in the same society while maintaining a mutually acceptable power structure (The Guinness Encyclopedia 1990:488).

Empiricism derives from the Greek *empeiria* which means "experienced in" or "acquainted with". In empiricism it is experience (the senses rather than the idea or essence) that is stressed as the source and basis of all knowledge (Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion 1980:146). While rationalism was still prevalent on the continent of Europe, the scientific movement of Francis Bacon (1561–1626), as well as his *revolutionary statement* that the natural sciences should be studied in order to gain control of the universe, had two important – and related – effects. On the *one* hand, public attention was, for the first time in history, captured by the idea that knowledge is equal to power and the acquisition of knowledge in schools became a goal in itself. On the *other* hand, knowledge of the present became to be regarded as more important (and having more power) than knowledge of the past. Because people who had knowledge of reality were also the ones who had (access to) social power, the new demand was for the inclusion of the sciences in the curriculum – a school curriculum which would be instrumental in helping the child understand and accept the laws of nature. The new perception of the aim of schooling was "empowerment" in the sense of being able to *control* nature for man's own benefit insofar as this was instrumental in gaining access to the power structures in society.

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Deeply influenced by the physics of Newton, and the role of the senses in reaching universal laws, Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) made a thorough and systematic analysis of the conditions of knowledge. In his *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), Kant came to the conclusion that reason can "provide knowledge only of things as they appear to us, never of things as they are in themselves" (The World Book Encyclopedia (15) 1975:388). Although the mind does not merely record facts as presented by the senses, but is actively involved, it is possible to have knowledge only of what can be experienced. Kant's analysis led him to the insight that *everything we are ever aware of has a complex and unified character*. It is, therefore, by virtue of a *conceptual framework* - constructed by sense perception but *determined by time and space* - that "we are able to make sense of experience at all" (The Guinness Encyclopedia 1990:489). Kant's truly *revolutionary* hypothesis, that the scope of our knowledge is thus limited to phenomena that can be distinguished and described in *objective* terms, added a new dimension to the perception (in the social consciousness) that objective knowledge was more important (or had more power) than subjective knowledge in determining the balance of power in society. This, in turn, led to increased demands for the inclusion of science (or objective knowledge) in the school curriculum.

However, it was the Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte (1798-1857) which proved to have the greatest impact on the *status of science* as the pivotal point in the controversy about the balance of power in demands on the school curriculum up till the present time. Our knowledge, he maintained, is limited to facts and the empirical laws establishing factual relations. For Comte the great prospect that lay ahead was the stage when society, and all social relations, could be explained in terms of truly scientific knowledge. The positive philosophy of Comte, as well as the scientific method of the justification of all knowledge, spread to England and the Americas. In due course it was also taken to South America and other European colonies - especially by missionaries - where it was to have a great influence on social perceptions regarding the role of the "colonialist" school curriculum in the balance of power in society (*cf* Chapter 4.5.3.2) (Collier's Encyclopedia (18) 1966:7-9).

2.3.3.2 NATURE AND THE ACCENT ON FREEDOM

The Enlightenment with its emphasis on rationalism and scientific objectivity spawned its own *antithesis*: an accent on freedom. Both the importance of the relationship involving nature, freedom and knowledge and the subsequent rise of the great movement of liberation date back to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The Age of the Enlightenment, and important scientific inventions brought in its wake the Industrial Revolution and great social movements. On the *one* hand, there was the newly-rich (*nouveau riche*) who – in order to challenge the established social hierarchy and power structure – were increasing their demands for more schools as a means of achieving social status. On the *other* hand, there was a widespread interest in humanitarian issues – the result of the extreme poverty on the other side of the scale – which provided a stimulus for the provision of education for the masses. However, the aim and content of mass education became the focus of the critical impulse (which had been started by John Locke in the seventeenth century and was spreading through intellectual circles in Europe) against the authority of truth (or knowledge) and, therefore, against the prevailing power structure in society.

In the universal criticism of the old order *two distinct views* about the power of knowledge were evident. There were those who stressed only the social objectives of curricular knowledge, in other words the implied control by the state in order to socialise the individual in such a way as to conform to the social ideals of the state (or nation) (Power 1970:461). The other major view was propagated by Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778).

In France, where liberty was lacking, the critical tradition was popularised by Voltaire and developed by Rousseau "who expressed a doctrine entirely acceptable to a great many common people, that the only justifiable purpose of education was to produce a man. Not a political man or a social man or any other special kind of man, but just a man" (Power 1970:461). Rousseau stressed the basic dignity of man: that man had certain basic rights. He claimed that freedom is a man's

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right and that the people as a body is autonomous. Therefore no one had any rightful authority over any other; even the state (or political authority) had to conform to the freedom and equality of all men. Rousseau *rejected*, not only traditional authority, but also the "modern" notion that man's happiness and progress can be measured in terms of science and knowledge (Collier's Encyclopedia (18) 1966:715). He was exceptionally critical of objectivity as the determinant of the balance of power in society. For him subjectivity, freedom, simplicity and romantic naturalism was more important in that it defined the *humanness* of people. These *revolutionary views* had a profound influence on social perceptions about democracy and traditional authority. Consequently his emphasis on liberty, fraternity and equality was to influence the focus of demands for the democratic distribution of educational resources, and for the elimination of perceived "discrimination" and "oppression", in the aim and content of education, up to the present time (The Guinness Encyclopedia 1990:419). This was also the beginning of a controversy still prevalent today. Is it the role of the school curriculum to maintain or to change the balance of power in society?

2.3.3.3 ACCENTS IN EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY DEBATES

Two mainstreams in the *authority of truth* (or that with which the power of knowledge is associated in the social consciousness), namely the importance of logic, mathematics and *science* as the only authority of truth, on the one hand, and the growing concern with man himself and his *humanness*, on the other hand, are evident in the accents of early twentieth century thought on knowledge and power.

2.3.3.3.1 PRAGMATISM

The growing concern with how man could survive and adjust to a changing world was inspired by the evolution theory of Darwin. Influenced by the concept that all organisms survive because they are adapted to the needs of life in their environment, William James (1842-1910), in his epoch-making work *The Principles of Psychology* (1890), came to the conclusion that truth is that which works; that which solves the practical problems that confront mankind (Collier's Encyclopedia (18)

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1966:720). In other words, that the power of knowledge is determined by the outcome.

This view of truth, taken up and developed by *John Dewey (1859-1952)* in America, became the basis of the pragmatic view that truth is not absolute and that the truth (or the power) of knowledge is determined by its function (Power 1982:133). The implication is that *meaning* is more important than truth in maintaining or changing the balance of power in society since the known has meaning only insofar as it has significance for the knower. Dewey points out that, therefore, knowledge is a process "not a commodity to be purchased and stored away"; that, in fact, it is hardly possible to possess truth or knowledge; and, that knowledge is relative and depends upon its functional worth in time, place and circumstance (Power 1982:134). Hence change is natural and it is futile to fix authority in the timeless, the eternal or any other certainties in the intellectual or social world (Collier's Encyclopedia (18) 1966:720).

The views propagated by pragmatism, according to E.J. Power (1982:134), gave rise to a growing perception that truth is therefore "an opinion that has the support of and is finally accepted by all investigators". That, in fact, because a truth is such only for a particular set of historical conditions, demands for changes in the balance of power in society is part of a revitalising process: the vital truth is always a fresh discovery (Collier's Encyclopedia (18) 1966:720).

Consequently Dewey propagates the idea that schooling is not a preparation for life; schooling is life and should be like a society in miniature, one in which the school curriculum makes provision for a balance of power between politics, culture and economics, all of which are interrelated in society (Goodman 1989:89). Underlying the demand of pragmatism is that a good curriculum will empower students in terms of the prevailing civil, political and economic ideals for good citizenship in specific social reality. This means that the school curriculum has to prepare the child to adjust to the existing power structure in society and to accept gradual change as "normal".

2.3.3.3.2 LOGICAL POSITIVISM

In line with a growing perception of the importance of science as an important determinant of the balance of power in society, a recent form of positivism (a philosophical term used to describe the theory based on the view that, in both the social and natural sciences, the only source of worthwhile knowledge is sense experience - treated in a logical and scientific way) gained in importance.

Between 1920 and 1930 Logical Positivism was developed in Vienna by the so-called Vienna Circle (mainly associated with Moritz Schlick and Rudolph Carnap), and it later spread to the rest of the Western world. The *revolutionary approach* to Logical Positivism was that all questions can be treated scientifically and all genuine knowledge is part of a single system of science. Consequently, science was regarded as the only source of knowledge and metaphysics was claimed to be meaningless. The implication is that only truly scientific knowledge, "validated by appeal to neutral empirical observations" and therefore *objective*, is associated with truth (or power) (The New Encyclopaedia Britannica (25) 1986:666). Basic to this latter claim is the principle of verifiability by which a statement is meaningful only if it can be verified by sense experience (The World Book Encyclopedia (15) 1975:389). Therefore knowledge has power only when it can be verified analytically or empirically (Van Niekerk 1993:67). The twentieth century development of Logical Positivism can be interpreted as an effort to identify truly objective knowledge which is always *neutral*. This way of justifying the power of knowledge (as well as the perception that objective scientific knowledge will solve all the problems in society) has had such a great impact on the balance of power prevalent in the Western cultural ideal that all subsequent theorising on the meanings transmitted in the school curriculum (*i.e.* the power of knowledge) is mainly in reaction to the above interpretation of true knowledge.

In the 1930s Karl Popper (Romm 1987:182) countered the balance of power justified by adherents to earlier Logical Positivism (based on the assumption that objective knowledge was possible) by the *revolutionary* claim that, because "we can only apprehend and determine facts in the light of theories", the meaning of "knowledge" or "truth" is not

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immediately evident. Therefore, that, all knowledge is true (or powerful) until it is falsified. This, as well as the claim made by Thomas Kuhn (1968), that in each epoch one (or more than one) paradigm of truth will be established, superseded or effectively maintained by a system of cultural revolutions the outcome of which cannot be predicted in advance, had a great influence on the controversy about power and knowledge. Kuhn pointed out that, as long as a specific body of knowledge (and power structure) retains its power in the social consciousness, the corresponding paradigm of truth will exist – alone or in conjunction with one (or more) paradigm(s) of truth which may be successful in preserving sufficient power to survive the onslaught of a new paradigm (or paradigms) of truth (Smith 1993:227).

2.3.3.3.3 NEO-MARXISM

It was in reaction to the importance of logic, mathematics and science in determining the power of knowledge (and therefore the social status of the individual) as well as the growing importance of the economy in determining the life-chances of the individual, that the critical tradition of neo-Marxism gained prominence after the First World War. The Frankfurt School developed a new train of thought based upon the theories of Karl Marx (1818–1883) who believed that, because science as an invention has made possible new and different ways of meeting the needs of life, man's entire mentality has become part and parcel of a social power structure entirely dependent upon material conditions (Collier's Encyclopedia (18) 1966:718). It was in 1968, during the widespread student riots against authority, against the scientific tradition of positivism, and against the balance of power in the *status quo*, that neo-Marxism, as a critical theory which concerns itself mainly with conceptual changes, became known. Neo-Marxism holds that knowledge *cannot be neutral* or objective and is, therefore, critical of Logical Positivism, and of a school curriculum and a social power structure in which, it is argued, science and technology serve to enslave the individual (Snyman 1987:160,155).

In protest against all forms of traditional authority, discrimination, and inequality, neo-Marxism looks towards "new" bodies of knowledge by

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virtue of which the demands of all people will be met; towards the "democratisation" of the school curriculum; towards democratic partnership in the production of knowledge which will guarantee emancipation and freedom from oppression. The contradiction is that, at the same time, there is a striving towards being in key positions to control the knowledge-producing processes; towards gaining political supremacy by overthrowing the *status quo* through protest. Marcuse (Swart 1988:55) calls this the ideal of the New Enlightenment because he believes, like Adorno and Horkheimer (Snyman 1987:169), that the Enlightenment of the Modern Age has become a myth. What is important is that, like the tradition of positivism, neo-Marxists firmly believe that the neo-Marxist ideal is attainable through an appropriate body of knowledge only.

One of the most important exponents of neo-Marxism is *Jürgen Habermas*. In his *Knowledge and Human Interests*, which was published in 1972, he aims to show that it is an illusion to think that science (in terms of Logical Positivism) can produce absolute certainty (Romm 1987:179). Habermas (Van Niekerk 1994b) argues that knowledge is produced in terms of aims and goals; that all the available knowledge has been produced as a result of specific "interests" and is therefore not objective or the ultimate truth (and hence does not have absolute power). *Firstly*, there is a "technical" interest in order to predict natural and social events. This interest is directly related to the world of work and the empirical sciences; to a balance of power in which the power to control both nature and people is important. *Secondly*, the "practical" interest is related to communication and understanding. Language and cultural traditions – developed to facilitate communication within a specific social reality – are social constructs (neither rigid nor restrictive) with a potential to be transformed. Hence no human being needs to be trapped within a restrictive school curriculum, culture or body of knowledge. The option is to become part of the transformation; to transform the cultural tradition (or the corresponding body of knowledge); to remove restraints; to remove elements of power or exploitation (implicit in bodies of knowledge) which may prevent true communication between people or groups of people. Thus it is possible for each human being to be in control of his own social reality insofar as he has the power to command the knowledge-construction processes

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and, likewise, change the balance of power in society (Romm 1987:185). *Thirdly*, Habermas argues, knowledge produced in accordance with the "emancipatory" interest cannot be isolated from human endeavours and aspirations. Hence knowledge with an emancipatory interest is never objective. Such knowledge, produced for the purpose of engaging in the criticism of domination, oppression or mystification, is therefore not absolute "theory". However, because the aim is to achieve a meaningful social reality, knowledge produced in the interest of emancipation – or of an emancipatory curriculum aimed at changing the balance of power in society – is validated in terms of the truth evident in the outcome of such an emancipatory process (Romm 1987:180; Slaughter 1989:260).

The thesis that Habermas develops in *A Theory of Communicative Action* (1981) (Van Niekerk 1992a:180) has a direct bearing on demands concerning the role of the teacher (as the "link" between the school curriculum and the student) in the struggle for knowledge power. He maintains that language is a medium of communicative action (or social activity) which gives meaning to the knowledge communicated insofar as the hearer can be motivated to either accept or reject the validity of such knowledge. Habermas (Van Niekerk 1992a:183) holds that a speaker can justify knowledge in three ways. It can be

- the truth in terms of the objective world about which it is possible to obtain certain knowledge;
- legitimate in terms of a prevailing normative context; or
- sincere in terms of the intention.

Habermas (Giroux 1991b:11), however, is not only *critical* of positivism, he is *critical* of post-modernism as well. He argues that the post-modern view, which does not accept the modern view of realism and consensus, is symptomatic of the denouncement of reason. According to Habermas, post-modern demands on the school curriculum undermine the ideal of modernity and the promise of "democracy through the rule of reason" (Giroux 1991b:12).

2.3.4 CONCEPTUAL CHANGE IN THE LATTER PART OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Post-modernism had its origin in the realisation that the ideals of the Enlightenment, as exemplified in the scientific tradition, were not being

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attained; in other words, in the realisation that the power ascribed to objective knowledge in the modern tradition had not been instrumental in freeing mankind from various forms of oppression, nor in establishing a democratic balance of power in society (Smith 1993:232). Mainly in reaction to the tradition of empiricism (as the foundation of truth and certainty) the latter part of the twentieth century, and especially the decade from 1965 to 1975, brought a "major shift in the notion of reason" (Gasché 1988:530). This shift amounts to a *radical shift* in the conception of knowledge comparable to that which took place in the turn from medieval to modern thought; post-modernism may be described as a *reaction* to the large body of philosophical (and sociological thought) in support of the traditional social power structure (and school curriculum) adhered to by the positivist tradition (Murphy 1990:292).

This radical form of criticism – against the very foundation of the dominant Western cultural ideal (Gasché 1988:530) – indicates a paradigm shift which becomes evident in the reinterpretation of reality (in terms of nature and the subjective) and the balance of power (in terms of knowledge and identity) (Grebe 1991:128). Foucault (Martin 1988:10), for example, points out "that people accept as truth, as evidence, some themes which have been built up at a certain moment during history, and that this so-called evidence can be criticized and destroyed". Fundamental to post-modernism is a *crisis of power* which has given rise to increased criticism of the *status quo* and the traditional school curriculum. Questions are being asked about the authority of patriarchy, about a culture that is legitimised in terms of European high culture, about the role of reason and progress in striving towards an ideal of sameness, about science as the universal foundation of truth, about the elimination of nature and the denial of subjectivity (and the historical) in the construction of knowledge, and, about a "more" democratic balance of power in the social reality (Giroux 1991b:2–3).

Among those challenging empiricism are Feyerabend, who holds that the scientific method cannot be made the universal basis of factual knowledge or power (Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion 1980:147), and Thomas Popkewitz (Smith 1993:234), who maintains that the social, political and psychological interests of man are shrouded in or veiled by so-called value-neutral knowledge. The implication is that, if the

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mechanisms of power in knowledge (and the school curriculum) can be identified, it may be possible to transform knowledge and, in so doing, change the construction of identities in the process of socialisation; in other words, it may be possible to change the balance of power in society (Smith 1993:234). Post-modernism points to the importance of transforming curricular knowledge in such a way that it will be instrumental in changing the balance of power in the *status quo*. Characteristic of post-modern thought, therefore, is the accent on the importance of open and not closed bodies of knowledge, of complexity and not simplicity, of transformative and not accumulative knowledge (Doll 1989:244). Hence the closed systems of knowledge in the school curriculum, which are fundamental to the balance of power in the modern tradition, are seen as restricting the "humanness" of people (Sarup 1988:132).

Post-modernism holds that in contrast to Newton's simple and harmonious universe, we live in a complex world. As Slaughter (1989:255) points out: "the western/industrial world view based on certainty, predictability, control and instrumental rationality has become fractured and incoherent". Consequently, the traditional claim that there is only one way of knowing is rejected and the main focus in post-modernism is on the relativity of truth and a plurality of *meanings* (Rust 1991:616). It is furthermore pointed out that, because contemporary society is complex and plural and cannot be confined by knowledge which adheres to a universal standard of validity, curricular knowledge will have to take into account specific needs and interests.

Both Lévi-Strauss (Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion 1980:147) and Jean-Francois Lyotard (Sarup 1988:108,120), for example, argue that scientific knowledge is not representative of the whole body of knowledge. Narrative knowledge, such as popular stories or myths (regarded as "important knowledge" in traditional societies) by virtue of which social institutions are legitimised and/or negative models are represented; and, such as definitions of important concepts, for instance, "competence", "power" or the norms of what is right and wrong in any particular culture, is important knowledge too. Post-modernism argues that the prevailing respect for objective and scientific knowledge and for "pure intellectual excellence" does not take

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into account the humanness or the "rights" of people (Wasserman 1991:81). Moreover, objectivity takes on a new subjective dimension in that objectivity is "limited in our perceptions ... by our own place in space and time" (Doll 1989:247). Consequently "subjective" interpretations of truth and power will have to be accommodated in the school curriculum and in the knowledge construction processes (Rust 1991:619).

In post-modern thinking, which can thus be seen as a *crisis of perception* (Grebe 1991:128), the main focus is on a new interpretation of "democracy" as a stand against all forms of authority. Consequently, the demand is for curricular knowledge that is reinterpreted in terms of a new conception of democracy in which new and varied voices will have a share (Giroux 1991b:6). That is why Lyotard and Foucault (Sarup 1988:140), for example, are also critical of all demands on the school curriculum in which, what they call the imperialism of reason and the grand narratives of Marxian emancipation and sameness, are stressed. Their criticism is based on a perception of a new emerging world which is "decentered, constantly changing, without the chains and conventions of modern society" (Rust 1991:616).

The general context of transformation in post-modernism is having an effect on perceptions about "truth" in the traditional school curriculum. The school curriculum, by its nature, is committed to change. However, knowledge for transformation (aimed at changing the balance of power in society) has in mind, not intentional change directed by external entities like God, the environment or teachers, but change that is characterised by "spontaneity, internality and indefiniteness" (Zady & Duckworth 1991:248). Foucault (Smith 1993:235) points out that truth needs constant reinterpretation; that, because discourse will determine the truth at any given moment, communication in the production of knowledge will, therefore, also release curricular knowledge from its external orientation; and, that, because communication is more important than the material benefits of knowledge in determining a new balance of power in society, the intensity of any experience is important in determining the "truth" of knowledge at any particular time (Smith 1993:235). Accordingly, the focus in the power ascribed to knowledge is on the complex and the multiple web-like interacting forces between the

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knower and the known which has a great influence on the construction (as well as the "truth") of knowledge and, hence, on the balance of power in society. This also implies a radically different relationship between teachers and their students (Zady & Duckworth 1991:248). Post-modernism recognises the ability of the student to be part of the construction of knowledge and that teachers, the student, and the knowledge will be influenced by and through the process of transformation (Zady & Duckworth 1991:248-250).

Another important accent in post-modernist thought on power and knowledge is stressed by Daniel Bell (Rust 1991:620). In the 1970s Bell declared that a new social order was emerging, a social order in which "knowledge and information was replacing industrial commodity as the 'axial principle' of social organisation" (Rust 1991:620). In post-modern thought, not the value of work, but the value of knowledge, is important in determining the balance of power in society. However, the status of knowledge is altered by changes in the way knowledge is "acquired, classified, made available and exploited", the implication of which is that, in the changing patterns of work, knowledge will become "the major component in the world-wide competition for power" (Sarup 1988:118).

As a consequence post-modernism points out that, because "a mass-oriented society is obsolete" and "Superpower authority is failing", curricular knowledge will have to be transformed in order to accommodate a power structure based on multiple rather than majority rule (Rust 1991:618). Related to this is an emphasis, not on the separate, but on the cosmological. Although there is acceptance of scientific progress it is seen in a holistic framework which implies a new balance of power: not only group solidarity, but also a "new dialogue with nature" (Prirogine quoted in Doll 1989:248).

It is clear that the power of knowledge (and hence the role of the school curriculum in maintaining or changing the *status quo* in the social reality) is the central concern in post-modern thought. Consequently, under the influence of post-modern thinking – in which, according to Lyotard (Sarup 1988:118), knowledge and power are "simply two aspects of the same question" – as well as the corresponding

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changes in the social consciousness, the traditional school curriculum has become the object of intense scrutinisation by pressure groups struggling for (knowledge) power. The questions being asked about the school curriculum – by "new and varied" voices – therefore include:

Who decides which knowledge is important?

Who knows what need to be decided?

Who will have access to relevant knowledge?

2.4 SUMMARY

In the ongoing *controversy* about the *power of knowledge* – discerned throughout the ages – trends in the focus of demands on the school curriculum (aimed at its unique role in justifying or challenging the balance of power in society) – are, to a large extent, influenced by the prevailing *social reality*: by mutually dependent and intricately related changes in perceptions about *truth* and the *aim* of schooling.

Up till the modern age the paradigm shifts that have taken place in the *authority of truth* have been dependent upon a particular agreed set of *external forces*: Plato's forms or the "ideal", God or the objectivity of the scientific method. Basic to all of these was the possibility of *certainty* and universal truth. In post-modern times it is argued that truth is *relative*; that the *authority of truth* is dependent upon varying sets of circumstances and *constructed by communication* between the knower and the known. Not anymore a few "wise" men, or leaders of nations, or classic texts, but small groups or even individuals in a community are seen to be in possession of "truth" which can be used as the focus of demands to change the balance of power in society.

Evident, too, is that curricular knowledge, because it is seen as an important instrument in promoting any desired balance of power and, hence, the focal point in controversies centering around changing trends in the power associated with knowledge (which profoundly influences perceptions about the legitimacy of the supporting balance of power in society), retains the characteristics of preceding trends until such time as these are effectively challenged or until changes are deemed *legitimate* by society at large.

CHAPTER 3

THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM AND KNOWLEDGE POWER

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter does not profess to be an in-depth study of the relationship between the school curriculum and knowledge power. However, an attempt will be made to explain *key concepts* in the selected topic and to compile working definitions which can be used, for the purposes of this study, as part of the philosophical techniques necessary to clarify the existing relationship between the school curriculum and the demands of various power struggles.

In the course of this chapter attention will briefly be given to the influence of theoretical frameworks and community needs or pressures on both the aim of the curriculum and on the specific selection of knowledge to be included in the curriculum.

3.2 WHAT IS A CURRICULUM?

There are so many ways of looking at the curriculum that an attempt to answer the above question, in terms of this study in which "curriculum" takes a central position, will need careful consideration.

The word "curriculum" is derived from the Latin root "curo" which means "racecourse" (The National Encyclopaedia of Education (2) 1985:1160), and an authoritative source such as *The Oxford English Dictionary* (1989:152) defines it as "a regular course of study or training, as at a school". Cornel Hamm (1989:60) singles out *four* pertinent *characteristics* of a curriculum. The *first* is that it is "a program of activities of a limited sequence engaged in by pupils and teachers for the purpose of learning". *Secondly*, "that it is implemented in an institution like a school"; *thirdly*, that "curricula are planned and have a purpose", and therefore are not "random occurrences and activities"; and, *fourthly*, that "curriculum is a value neutral concept"

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only insofar as it can be planned for any purpose. This means that the most important question to ask about a curriculum is: "What is it for?"

In support of such a view of the curriculum one may cite the opinion of Musgrove (1969:6) who maintains that, implicit in the fact that it is planned and has a purpose, the curriculum is "an instrument for changing student behaviour; its objectives are statements of ways in which the knowledge, cognitive abilities, skills, interests, values, and attitudes of students should change if the curriculum is effective". What is more, he claims that *the* curriculum (in contrast to a curriculum) is not value-neutral, but an "artificial contrivance designed to accelerate change, promote change which would not have occurred, and control the direction of change". Inherent in this concept of the curriculum – that is to say as a course of study or a plan for what is to be taught to students in schools – is information about *what* (the knowledge content of the curriculum) is to be taught as well as *to whom*, *when*, and *how* it should be taught (Bennett & LeCompte 1990:179).

It follows, then, that "what" is taught to students in schools – the specific course of study – will have to "benefit" the student. It also follows that, as the "what" has to be determined, and the "benefit" has to be interpreted, a "selection", will, of necessity, have to be made from all the knowledge available at a specific time and place. Because such a selection implies that the question of "why" be addressed, it means that curricular knowledge cannot be neutral. The selection of knowledge for the curriculum will thus be a reflection of certain identifiable societal needs (Van Niekerk 1992:126) in terms of the aims or purposes determined by what is regarded as "important", "valid" or "relevant". And it is this selection or content of the curriculum, regarded as subjective and contentious precisely because it is a selection, that invokes demands and is therefore the source of conflict in the struggle for power. For the same reason the specific selection of knowledge in the curriculum is central to any discussion or controversy about the aim, "validity" or "relevance" of the curriculum (De Vries, Du Plessis & Steyn 1992:34). It is obvious, though, that different interpretations of "important", "valid" or "relevant" may lead to different conceptions of

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the curriculum which, in turn, may lead to differences of opinion or even conflict.

Here it should be noted that Illich (1972:46) regards the curriculum as something that the school sells; as "a bundle of goods made according to the same process and having the same structure as other merchandise" in society. Supplementary to this is Paolo Freire's view of the curriculum as an instrument of either oppression (by the *status quo*) or liberation (from existing power structures in the *status quo*) (Freire 1983:33). Freire expresses the opinion that the curriculum should be used as an instrument to change the social consciousness of the "people" in their struggle against the "oppressors". The curriculum is thus seen in terms of its usefulness to certain liberation movements.

In this regard it is important to note that, according to Stenhouse (1978:15), "the school is teaching a content [curriculum] on which it has a lease rather than a possession. In most cases possession is felt to lie in some group outside the school which acts as a point of reference and a source of standards". Reflected in the content of the curriculum will necessarily be conventions and values associated with conforming to these standards (Stenhouse 1978:12). Hence the aim of the curriculum, that is to make available to the student a current "selection of society's intellectual, emotional and technical capital", which Stenhouse (1978:6) calls "public traditions", may indeed elicit differences of opinion. But, as both Dr Elsie Calitz (1994) and Prof W.F. Söhnge (1994) are prepared to underline, a curriculum is always a compromise.

While the knowledge content of the curriculum, also "known as *the curriculum*", is a "detailed statement of the items of knowledge to be 'covered' or 'taught'" in school, the actual "items of knowledge", in other words the content of an educational curriculum, "is selected to bring about those valuable qualities of mind characteristic of an educated person" (Hamm 1989:61-62); a person who has the ability to be responsible for his own choices in a specific social reality. This means that the curriculum "must take into account certain basic factors within this broad structure of social function if the education provided ... is to be appropriate and valid" (quoted in Van Niekerk 1992:120). An educational curriculum has to take into account the needs of -

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- a) the community (such as culture, economy and social needs);
- b) the child (such as cognitive and affective needs);
- c) knowledge (in order to be manageable, a selection from the world of nature and the world of culture will have to be made) (Van Niekerk 1992:120-127).

It is this selection, seen as the "legitimation" of certain bodies of knowledge, that is proving to be highly controversial (Apple & Weis 1986:9), since curricular knowledge, as a selection, can never be neutral because it has to be closely related to the social, political and economic context within which it exists. It also means that the impact of curricular knowledge on the learning experience will be determined by how this knowledge is taught and by the social purposes for which it has been selected (Marsden 1989:510).

Consequently the curriculum will have to be viewed, not only as an integral part of the social, cultural and economic context, but also as the outcome of previous power struggles in order to understand why particular forms of knowledge and processes of learning have come to be considered important and valid, while others are excluded. Hence, a widely held view is that the curriculum is something that reveals, *firstly*, whether or not certain knowledge is valued by the public in any given society, *secondly*, "why and how the process of differential valuing and legitimation of knowledge comes about" and, *finally*, "how it relates to the broader distribution of power and authority in our society": in other words, in whose interest has the selection of knowledge been made (Henry *et al* 1990:61; Baker 1994:5-8).

However, as Warwick (1975:13) stresses, the most important facet of a curriculum is balance; the ability to adapt to the changing needs of the individual and society without destroying essential continuity. Hence an effective curriculum is not something which "is taken from outside and beyond the school and imposed upon it by those in authority" (Warwick 1975:16). Warwick further argues that a direct relationship between the content of the curriculum and life as it exists outside the school is fundamental to an effective or meaningful curriculum, because it has to take into account the needs of society as well as the needs of the pupils, the skills of the teachers and the facilities of the school.

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It should be noted that, within the context of what the curriculum is to comprise, there is a widely held view of the curriculum as "the sum total of the means by which a student is guided in attaining the intellectual and moral discipline requisite to the role of an intelligent citizen in a free society" (quoted in Carl 1986:14). According to this view the curriculum is more than a course of study, or goals and objectives, "rather, it encompasses all of the learning experiences that students have under the direction of the school" (quoted in Carl 1986:14). In agreement with this view, and for the purpose of this study, then, "curriculum" will be regarded as the actual knowledge content of the curriculum (which will include the total learning experience of the student in the school).

It will, therefore, be necessary to explore both the changes in emphasis that have influenced the provision of education and the aim and content of the school curriculum (in other words, the legitimization of the school curriculum) as well as the theoretical frameworks underlying the most important prevailing conceptions of the curriculum.

3.2.1 CHANGING EMPHASES IN THE PROVISION OF EDUCATION

Today education is sometimes seen as "the process that allows each new generation to learn *and sometimes even challenge* the knowledge, skills, values and behaviour that have been developed by previous generations" (The Guinness Encyclopedia 1990:260; italics added by this author). In ancient communities the aim and content of education was relatively simple. Each new generation had to pass on all the accumulated knowledge deemed necessary for survival in the social reality; in other words, to educate was to pass on the culture, experience and wisdom gained in the past. Because education was simply the transmission of community culture from generation to generation there was continuity between successive generations. Moreover, the content – closely related to the needs of the home and community – was relevant to everyday life. This enabled the child not only to understand, but also to adjust to and fully participate in community life and culture (Njobe 1990:12).

In time, because of the escalating volume of knowledge, parents and the community were not able to fulfil this task anymore. Teachers and the

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formal school were better equipped to teach children the new and extended volume of knowledge (Njobe 1990:18). The teacher, however, was seen as an assistant to the parent, a helper, somebody with specialised knowledge in certain aspects of the new (extended) content of education (Njobe 1990:18).

From the beginning all schools, and especially the curriculum, had a very specific aim (and it is this "traditional" aim which is being challenged as not being relevant to changing times): the transmission of knowledge which would enable the student to survive, to attain a certain standard of living and to become "empowered" in terms of the norms of the time. These aims included knowledge to make reasonable judgements, to become a better citizen, to become a church or social leader, to acquire a practical skill with which to earn a living, to become literate and read the Bible or to learn more about nature in order to control nature for the material benefit of mankind. Knowledge in the school curriculum was always associated with an elite group: the curriculum was instrumental in giving certain groups access to knowledge which would help them maintain a certain social status. Such an "elite" group was effectively "liberated" from whatever were regarded as the "shackles" of the time. At the same time, however, the knowledge - or the lack of knowledge - in the curriculum served to bind the child firmly to a particular cultural group or a particular position of power in the social hierarchy of a particular social reality at a particular time.

While a particular school curriculum could emphasise one or more of the following ends: individual, community, political, religious, social, national or economic needs, the aim and transmission of a specific selection of curricular knowledge would be legitimised by the dominant cultural or ideological ideals. Hence the school curriculum has historically been associated with criticism and struggle: "a kind of cultural battleground, a site of class and cultural conflict" (Henry *et al* 1990:66). Rather than simply something imposed or neutrally benevolent, it has become "a contending battle between different [political, social and] class forces for control over the 'hearts and minds' of the people" in order to promote an envisaged balance of power in society (Henry *et al* 1990:66).

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If one looks at the aim and content of the school curriculum in Western civilisation through the ages (*cf* Chapter 2) it is obvious that the "traditional" curriculum (in the sense of being the established curriculum at any particular time) was challenged whenever, due to a change in the perception of "important" knowledge, the prevailing balance of power in the social structure was being challenged. What is interesting is that each demand on the school curriculum (according to whoever is making the demand) has the same purpose insofar as it *professes* to have in mind a truly educated (intellectually, socially, culturally or economically liberated) individual as part of a specific social reality (albeit in terms of a "new" conception of "democracy" or "the good life" which reflects a *new ideal of the balance of power and/or the ideal social system* in that time and age); in other words, liberation from the "traditional" balance of power (as it had been interpreted and established by whoever had had sufficient social, political or economic power to secure control of the knowledge content of the school curriculum)

The above picture of the changing aims of education is in direct contrast to the view that curricular knowledge is "more or less ... neutral" (Henry *et al* 1990:69). However, it should be pointed out that there is a vast difference between the neutral concept of "the curriculum" as a general term, as opposed to "*the* curriculum" as a specific selection of knowledge for a specific purpose. The problem facing us, as Williams (Whitty 1985:11) points out, is that an "educational curriculum as we have seen again and again in past periods, expresses a compromise between an inherited selection of interests and the emphasis of new interests. At varying points in history, even this compromise may be long delayed" or the course to be taken will not be crystal clear. "The fact about our present curriculum is that it was essentially created by the nineteenth century, following some eighteenth-century models, and retaining elements of the medieval curriculum near its centre. Although it is possible that a case can be made for every item in it, its omissions are startling" (Williams quoted in Whitty 1985:11).

According to Lundgren (Gundem 1994:1304) *four historic principles* have influenced the aims of education and the specific purpose of the modern

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school curriculum. In the *first* place, there is the classical principle with its focus on the formative character of classic languages; *secondly*, the realistic principle which evolved at the same time that science was established as a precondition for industrialisation; *thirdly*, the moral principle – with its roots in ancient times and medieval religious morality – which became important when mass schooling was being established; and, *fourthly*, the rational principle associated with the development of the mind and rational thinking.

In ancient and medieval times the school curriculum was mostly utilitarian in that it provided knowledge deemed necessary for social leaders, certain key professions or the spread of Christianity. Moreover, a "distrust" of too much "learning" – often associated with breaking free from traditional authority which usually resulted in misery and alienation – was not uncommon. It was only later, with the advent of mass schooling, that the acquisition of knowledge as an aim in itself was accepted and firmly established.

What is important, though, is that mass schooling (general public education in contrast to elite schooling for the sons and, later, daughters of the upper classes) is a relatively recent phenomenon. The industrial revolution was to effect a complete change in the spirit of society and demands for school education. Hence it was at the end of the nineteenth century, after increasing demands "for educational credentials from 'middling' social groups" that free, universal and compulsory elementary schooling came to be universally acceptable (Marsden 1989:509).

The reasons for the demand for and rapid expansion of schooling can be attributed to two main factors. In the *first* place, there was a shift from a family-based economy to an economy which operated largely outside the family. The result was that the economy, on a large scale, was not dependent on the family as a unit anymore. Thus family and work were separated; family and work came to represent distinct economic and social domains. The curriculum, seen as utilitarian, had to adjust so that it could provide skills for the productive workforce in the changing economy – an economy based on industrialism. In the *second* place, and at the same time, there was a social purpose for the

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establishment of schools. The shift from a family-based economy to an economy in which money was important in determining social status, posed the problem of different and changing social relationships as well as new attitudes to work. The curriculum had to make provision for the socialisation of students into both the new workforce and the social relations that were dependent upon the new social hierarchy (Bowles and Gintis 1976:157-158; Henry *et al* 1990:64). In the "new" countries (or colonies) where the population came to be made up of a wide variety of cultures, the school curriculum had an additional task. It had to make provision for socialisation into the dominant culture: the making of a nation. Moreover, after the Second World War, another important change in the social mood - in conjunction with the development of technology - gave rise to yet more changing social and economic demands on the school curriculum.

Because many different and contradictory considerations were at the heart of the provision and purpose of schooling for the masses, the curriculum was always a reflection of certain principles as well as demands from both the ruling and the working classes. Owing to the different and often contradictory demands, the curriculum gradually became a complex and sophisticated entity closely associated with the growth of a new middle class and a power structure in which the middle class (allied in terms of power to the elite) played an important role.

The result of this complex interaction was that the school curriculum came to be associated with "life-chances" (Emmerij 1974:4) and hence instrumental in gaining economic and, by extension, social status (Bowles and Gintis 1976:157-158). This is one of the main reasons why increasingly, especially in liberal thinking, school education has come to be seen as a "right" for all people rather than a privilege. This is also the reason why demands for specific bodies of knowledge and demands for changes to the existing school curriculum, from a wide range of social pressure groups, environmental awareness groups as well as the economy, are escalating. But what all these demands have in common is that, in one way or another, school education is perceived as a social good.

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However, the growing demands for "relevant" knowledge, in order to satisfy the needs of special interests groups or the community for its general development, have resulted in diverse and often disparate demands on the knowledge to be included in the curriculum (Emmerij 1974:4). This is an important point which requires a more detailed look at current conceptions of the curriculum as well as the influence of sociological assumptions on the way various power groups relate to the curriculum.

3.2.2 CURRENT CONCEPTIONS OF THE CURRICULUM

Recent research in South Africa concluded that *five important theoretical frameworks*, underlying the interpretation of what is regarded as "important", "valid" or "relevant" in the curriculum, can be identified in current conceptions of the aim, content and perceived role of the school curriculum in enforcing or changing societal patterns (De Vries *et al* 1992:39-43).

3.2.2.1 THE ACADEMIC SUBJECT CURRICULUM PARADIGM

Adherents to this paradigm believe that "just as the heart of schooling is the curriculum, the irreducible element of curriculum is knowledge" (McNeil 1977:47). *Academic subjects* – primarily intellectual and including language and literature, mathematics, the natural sciences, history, social sciences, and the fine arts – represent the nucleus of the (so-called liberal) knowledge content taught in schools. Academic subjects and the cultivation of *reason* is important because it is by mental discipline that truth and knowledge is attained. It is argued that the academic curriculum, which includes the finest achievements of a particular cultural heritage, will enable the student to add to this heritage through his own efforts (McNeil 1977:55).

The importance of the development of the intellect can be traced back to the educational ideals of the Classic Greek Age (*cf* Chapter 2.3.1). The aim of the classic curriculum was to aid and sustain a just and democratic balance of power in a stable society. Teachers had to transmit knowledge that would prepare an elite group to become political leaders that would be "philosopher-kings" or guardians. Helpers or workers did not require the same education as they would remain in a

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specific occupation. The legitimacy of this system was seen in terms of inherent individual differences: the theory that leaders and workers (both men and women) were intellectually different and inequality was simply a biological fact. Inherited qualities (clever parents will usually have clever children and less clever parents less clever children) assign people to their different roles. Schools were places where provision was made for the sons of guardians to become guardians because the sons of workers would remain workers. (This idea of innate inequality and rigid class structures has, to a large extent, been abandoned in most Western countries after the Second World War) (De Vries *et al* 1992:39; Holmes & McLean 1989:8-9).

As the academic curriculum was originally devised for future leaders only, it offered restricted access to a minority and resulted in excellence and elitism. Because the importance of the curriculum to "cultivate reason, wisdom, the vision of truth and love of beauty cannot be dismissed", this approach is still advocated long after its supporting "political and sociological theories have been rejected" (Holmes & McLean 1989:9).

Nonetheless, the academic curriculum has been a great success throughout the ages and the prestige of the academic curriculum was well established before the Industrial Revolution of the nineteenth century. In fact, such was the faith in intellectual development that, in spite of mass education to provide in the needs of the Industrial Revolution, academic schools proved to be in demand. Mainly on account of the tradition of excellence and the ensuing importance of the so-called liberal curriculum as a prerequisite for higher education, the academic curriculum came to be associated with social status and access to elite groups. As a result of this, the academic curriculum has retained its prestige value and has been regarded as "important" knowledge right up to the present time. Consequently, abstract or intellectual knowledge has come to be seen as "more" important than concrete or practical knowledge. Because certain bodies of knowledge, for example knowledge pertinent to manual labour, has low prestige value the academic curriculum is regarded by many as being discriminatory in that it stratifies knowledge into different "status" categories closely related to positions of power in the social reality (cf

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Chapters 4 & 5). However – to a greater or lesser degree – the same may be said of the following curriculum paradigms which are all, in one way or another, a reaction to the academically-biased curriculum (De Vries *et al* 1992:39–40).

3.2.2.2 THE ECONOMIC-PRAGMATIC CURRICULUM PARADIGM

In reaction to the above idealistic approach a more pragmatic approach towards the content of the curriculum emerged: knowledge in an economic-pragmatic curriculum should focus, not only on intellectual development, but also on the economic environment of the student and the practical knowledge necessary for the actual job the student is going to perform in order to make a living. For the pragmatists, who regard a career in the economy as important, the curriculum is seen in terms of manpower development. The focus in the curriculum should, therefore, be on scientific and technological knowledge. The underlying assumption is that it is important for the self-esteem of the individual to "work". However curricular knowledge and students are sometimes seen as resources or instruments to serve the goals or purposes of the economy (*cf* Chapter 5.3) (De Vries *et al* 1992:41; McNeil 1977:59).

3.2.2.3 THE POLITICAL-IDEOLOGICAL CURRICULUM PARADIGM

Political-ideological influences have been evident in the prevailing mono-cultural bias of the content of the school curriculum since the beginning of formal education in a multi-cultural South Africa. In reaction to this, and mainly as result of distrust and suspicion of the aims of the traditional school curriculum (and the traditional balance of power), adherents to this curriculum paradigm formulate their concept of a political-ideological school curriculum in terms of resistance to the *status quo*; advocates of "People's Education" (*cf* Chapter 4.5), for example, are in favour of a curriculum designed explicitly to implement socio-political change (De Vries *et al* 1992:42).

3.2.2.4 THE COMMUNITY EDUCATION PARADIGM

This theoretical framework largely focuses attention on the fact that the content of the curriculum should be relevant to the needs of the community, community development, cultural traditions and the local

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situation. The aim is to establish a "culture of learning" as well as socio-economic mobility; to encompass a balance of power in which the needs of employers as well as the needs of the individual and society at large will be met. This curriculum paradigm, which focuses on that which is relevant to and acceptable in the community, has gained worldwide importance as a means of coping with the intensifying and multi-cultural demands on the school curriculum in a democratic way (De Vries *et al* 1992:43-44).

3.2.2.5 THE ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PARADIGM

In reaction to the problems of pollution and the exploitation of the environment for material benefits, and partly "due to the many side effects or unintended effects of rapid technological change" (Dalin 1978:15), it was realised that natural resources are not inexhaustible (*cf* Chapter 5.4). Worldwide this has given rise to a growing awareness that not only the needs of the community, but also the needs of man and his role in preserving the environment in order to survive, will have to be taken into account in the school curriculum (De Vries *et al* 1992:46).

For supporters of this educational paradigm, it is important that curricular knowledge will neither fall prey to fragmentation nor be isolated from the source of knowledge. The global importance of the environment will have to serve as a unifying bond across cultural or political boundaries and will have to provide the basis for a new balance of power in society; a new consensus on the aims of education (De Vries *et al* 1992:47). Environmental education is important in that it "transcends all boundaries": it has to become the concern of each individual on earth (Myburgh 1994a:7).

3.2.3 THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS ON THE AIM OF THE CURRICULUM

Sociologists support different schools of thought regarding the aim and content of the school curriculum. There are those who suggest that the aim of a school curriculum will always be a reflection of the social and economic structures in society. Others, for example the supporters of the Marxian model, will argue that social and economic structures

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dominate the aim of the school curriculum. Yet others see the aim of the school curriculum as the outcome of struggle: the outcome of the struggle for power between social pressure groups, the government, the Church, teachers, local government, bureaucrats, employers, institutions and parents (Baker 1994:5,6).

However, the sociology of education identifies two broad – and opposing – strands in the assumptions underlying theories about the aim of the school curriculum: social transmission (or reproduction) theories and social transformation (or production) theories.

3.2.3.1 SOCIAL TRANSMISSION OR REPRODUCTION THEORIES

Functionalism has been the prevailing theoretical framework in the social sciences for most of the twentieth century. Basic to functionalism is an emphasis on the importance of structure in achieving *order and stability*. Similar to a living organism, vital functions have to be carried out in a society and each institution plays a part in *maintaining the health of the whole* (Chapman 1986:38). Likewise, each person is assigned to his or her place within the power structure. Consequently, not all persons will need to be in possession of the same knowledge; different tasks will require different bodies of knowledge. A social system is healthy (or sound or in equilibrium) when each person is doing the task assigned to him or her. The implication of this is that a system is sound only when *change takes place gradually* (Bennett & LeCompte 1990:6).

Functionalism sees the curriculum as an important social structure with the function of *perpetuating the "accepted" or dominant power structure* in an effort to maintain stability and keep the entire system in balance (Bennett & LeCompte 1990:6). The function of the curriculum is to transmit a selection of the accumulated cultural knowledge in such a way that each student will be equipped with knowledge pertinent to his or her future role in maintaining the equilibrium or stability of a specific society (Chapman 1986:37–38).

The **conflict theory** (or reproduction theory) (cf Bowles and Gintis 1976; Carnoy and Samoff 1990) is related to neo-Marxism. It is directly

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opposed to functionalism and questions the claim that the dynamics of social systems can be explained in terms of social equilibrium and the maintenance of existing patterns. Conflict theorists focus their *attention on the inequalities* that are being reproduced when transmitting accumulated knowledge in order to maintain existing patterns. Questions about how the perpetuation of such perceived inequalities could be prevented have led to a rethinking of the relationship between the school curriculum and patterns of economic and social opportunity (Bennett & LeCompte 1990:12). Conflict theorists see the curriculum in terms of the unequal resource distribution in the economy which gives rise to conflict (Chapman 1986:43-44); they are *critical* of the reproduction of economic, cultural and political inequalities that are being reproduced by the existing school curriculum regardless of changes in the social reality.

Both the functional and conflict theories are concerned with the transmission of existing bodies of knowledge. *Functionalism* sees this as the way to preserve and maintain the balance of power in society. *Conflict theory*, on the other hand, is critical of the fact that transmission of existing bodies of knowledge serves to perpetuate perceived inequalities and imbalances in the power structure: that, for example in the way in which knowledge in the curriculum is stratified, discriminatory practices are being perpetuated (Bennett & LeCompte 1990:19-20).

3.2.3.2 SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION OR PRODUCTION THEORIES

The *interpretive* theory evolved from conflict theory and is based on the way cultural reproduction takes place. It is stressed that the meaning of knowledge is socially constructed (or produced) and that, therefore, *social control* is evident in the school curriculum (cf Young 1977). The school curriculum is seen as a body of "socially organised knowledge" and it is important that the *social meaning of various kinds of knowledge* will be explored. Interpretive theorists focus on "the collective and shared meanings". According to Gorbett (Whitty 1985:13) this means that "truth and objectivity are human products" and that there is no possibility of absolute knowledge and hence that "knowledge at all levels", both "common sense" as well as "theoretical and

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scientific" knowledge, is *relative* (Whitty 1985:13). Consequently, such a standpoint denies any possibility of achieving an interest-free objective body of knowledge in the school curriculum.

The concern of the interpretive theory is to explore the ways in which meaning is generated in the curriculum and in the classroom; to determine to what extent seemingly final interpretations of the knowledge content of the curriculum is socially constructed and hence contestable. The interpretive approach differs from that of the neo-Marxist view. The former is interested in ways in which the curriculum is "created, maintained and reinvented" in the context of each social reality while the latter sees all ideas imparted by curriculum as the product of an ideological class struggle (McKay & Romm 1992:53). Attention in the interpretive approach is drawn to the *interrelatedness* of power and what is regarded as "worthwhile" knowledge; and to how the notions of "truth" and "validity" are dependent upon criteria determined by *external principles* which are themselves subject to change (McKay & Romm 1992:87,88,70,54).

Critical social theory is derived from both functional and conflict theories and "shares with conflict theory a concern for the existence of social and economic inequality" (Bennett & LeCompte 1990:24). Critical theorists focus on the way in which *social, political and economic oppression* is evident in the school curriculum. The curriculum is a source of inequality and discrimination insofar as knowledge and meanings are stratified within it. Because the *curriculum* is seen in terms of its *power to bring about social changes*, the aim is to locate contradictions which can be used in the struggle to implement the desired changes in the power structure (Bennett & LeCompte 1990:30). One of the best known critical theorists, Paulo Freire (*cf* Freire 1983; Freire & Shor 1987), stresses the role of the teacher in the social construction of the meaning of curricular knowledge in bringing about changes.

Since the middle of the 1980s a distinct new group of critical social theories have emerged. In spite of differing emphases, they all focus on the importance of *social interaction* with the curriculum as well as on the representation of all the "multiple voices" of participants -

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"especially less powerful participants such as women [and] ... members of minority groups, and students" (Bennett & LeCompte 1990:29). These groups of critics believe that for general elite domination merely *another form of domination*, for example that of the white male, has been substituted. They see the knowledge in the curriculum as discriminatory in that some groups have access to certain bodies of knowledge while others groups are denied this access. Consequently, the desires of the group are seen to play an important part in the production of knowledge. It is through *resistance* of the "imposed" curriculum that teachers and students are *empowered* and able to become part of the knowledge production process (Bennett & LeCompte 1990:30).

From the exposition of the sociological assumptions above it is clearly important to look at the concept of "knowledge".

3.3 WHAT IS KNOWLEDGE?

3.3.1 THE NATURE OF KNOWLEDGE

The word "knowledge" is derived from the Greek *gignoskein* which means "to decide upon, determine, or decree". In classical Greek philosophy Plato sees knowledge (*episteme*) as a contrast to opinion (*doksa*). The highest form of knowledge is wisdom (*sophia*) which, for Plato, is knowledge of the whole and, for Aristotle, is knowledge of the first principles or first causes of things (Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion 1980:283). *The Oxford English Dictionary* ({VIII} 1989:517) gives the meaning of "knowledge" as "intellectual acquaintance with, or perception of, fact or truth; clear and certain apprehension; the fact, state, or condition of understanding", while *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* (1983:556) gives the meaning as "knowing" or "familiarity gained by experience".

Inherent in the concept of "knowledge" is the concept of *relations*: the fundamental relationship between man and that which, for him, constitutes reality . If "reality" is indicative of the norm man uses in his quest for security and a place in the sun, then "knowledge" pertains to the effort as well as the process and the result of such effort (Van Niekerk 1993:4). Knowledge "is intrinsic to human culture"

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because it is fundamental to knowing the world in which we live (Van Niekerk 1994b). Knowledge embraces "the facts believed to compose the world, the proper methods or techniques by which to cope with them in order to gain a particular end, the attitudes or orientation that are appropriate to adopt toward them, and the ideas or theories by which one makes sense of facts, methods, and attitudes, explaining and legitimizing them" (Freidson 1988:2). Hence, while our spiritual, material and social life is reflected in that which we know (Van Niekerk 1994) knowledge is also the basis of "the individual's relationship to the knowledge which is learned": knowledge is the basis upon which communication takes place (MacDonald & Dale 1977:3).

Hence the answer to the question *What is knowledge?* "depends in part on the kinds of things known" (Hamm 1989:62). Philosophers (*cf* Pears 1972:13,96; Van Niekerk 1993:4,7-9) suggest that, in very general terms, *three kinds of knowledge* can be distinguished in that which we know. These are

- knowledge which is the result of *acquaintance* (in other words, the direct result of personal encounter or experience);
- to *know how* to do things (for example, practical skills and techniques). Such knowledge is usually associated with making or doing something, with a high degree of physical movement or with practice; and,
- to *know that* (in other words, factual or propositional knowledge). While such knowledge is pertinent to the content of an assertion or claim, it gives information about what is or is not the case and entails value judgements about what is or is not the case. Such knowledge is usually associated with ability, with something "not so obviously physical but rather mental", with "theory" and with "understanding" - as distinct from simply making or doing something (Brownhill 1983:55).

It is clear that the concept of "knowledge", as well as being highly problematical in itself, has an important characteristic that may give rise to a problem: I can know, or not know what knowledge is (Pears 1972:3). Traditionally propositional knowledge elicits disagreement because it is not always easy to distinguish between *opinion*, *belief* and *knowledge*. On the whole philosophers agree (Van Niekerk 1994b) that,

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for a proposition to be *knowledge*, it has to conform to *three conditions* or criteria:

- it has to be formulated in language;
- it has to be the truth;
- it has to be justifiable/verifiable.

However, in contemporary (and especially in post-modern) thinking the trend is away from viewing knowledge as verifiable, and "truth" as objective or universal, towards *context* as an important determinant of "truth". This focuses attention on *relativity* as a possible attribute of both "truth" and the criteria of true and certain knowledge (cf Chapters 2.3.3; 2.3.4 & 3.3.3) (Haes 1982:59).

Nevertheless, to say "I know" is not the same as to say "it is true" (Ayer 1958:13,15). To say "I know" can mean that one has guessed, dreamt or experienced. Hence it is necessary to consider the *three conditions* which are accepted, by and large, as necessary and sufficient for knowing: *belief*, *truth*, and *evidence*. It is not suggested that belief is sufficient for the claim to know; only that it is necessary. "*Merely believing is never sufficient for knowing*" (Hamm 1989:64). While the condition of truth is simply "that which is so", the claim of truth can be reversed when it is found that it is not so. The condition of evidence concerns the grounds of adequate evidence - in terms of the available evidence at the time of saying "I know" - notwithstanding the fact that later evidence may prove it to be false (Hamm 1989:65). For the purpose of this study, then, knowledge will be treated as that which we know.

3.3.2 CERTAINTY AND DOUBT: THE ORIGIN OR JUSTIFICATION OF KNOWLEDGE

In contrast to belief (*doksa*), knowledge (*episteme*) is verifiable or justifiable. The problem, however, is to determine the origin of absolute certainty (or the power ascribed to knowledge). According to Beyer (1988:49; italics added by this author) "*two general routes* have been trodden to obtain certain and verifiable knowledge"; through *philosophy* and through the *natural and social sciences*.

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For Plato the way to obtain objective disinterested truth was by means of the proper line of reasoning and enquiry in striving towards the Ideal Form: a mental separation from fallible human and physical day to day living. Religion, too, was convinced that true and certain knowledge existed, the origin of which was situated in the ultimate Ideal – God (cf Chapter 2.3.1 & 2.3.2).

Although modern philosophy gradually turned away from the transcendental or conceptual world view and abandoned the search for an ideal as the authority of truth, it did not abandon its search for true and certain knowledge (cf Chapter 2.3.3). The growing faith in science and scientific research cultivated an interest in reality and – due to a growing mechanistic world view – heralded the emergence of a new vision of knowledge: of Positivism and the possibility of rationality and objectivity in obtaining true and certain knowledge (Beyer 1988:65,62). The primary task of Logical Positivism – based upon the ideas of Comte and developed in a new form in the twentieth century (cf Chapter 2.3.3.2) – was to identify criteria for the justification of true and certain knowledge. Based upon the assumption that the correct method is of the utmost importance in the justification of knowledge it was concluded that a proposition is meaningful only when it can be verified analytically or empirically (the scientific method): in which case the cognitive value is indisputable and objective and neutral knowledge becomes possible (Van Niekerk 1993:66,68).

In *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Thomas Kuhn (1968:7) challenged the notion that the empirically-based scientific method is neutral. He argues that scientific work is done within a paradigm constituted of "a complex and interactive set of assumptions, beliefs and observations" (Beyer 1988:70). Accordingly, there is no such thing as "merely factual data". Kuhn's suggestion that "notions of right and wrong, truth and falsehood, apply only within certain paradigms" was to have great influence on all subsequent criticism of the positivistic claim that the scientific method (and science) could lead to valid and objective knowledge (Brownhill 1983:20).

Another "crack" appeared in the foundation upon which the positivists based their justification of certainty when Karl Popper, in his

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Conjectures and Refutations (1985:30), emphatically stated that we should "give up the idea of ultimate sources of knowledge, and admit that all knowledge is human; that it is mixed with our errors, our prejudices, our dreams, and our hopes; that all we can do is to grope for truth even though it be beyond our reach". Also Pears, in his *What is knowledge?* (1972:3), stresses the human origin of knowledge. He says: "A piece of knowledge never breaks entirely loose from the person who produced it".

However, as Van Niekerk (1993:53) argues, implicit in any judgement we make, is the intention with which it is made. If, therefore, truth is made entirely dependent upon the subject, if the measure of truth is subjective, it becomes problematic to justify truth upon any account. The question then arises whether truth is at all possible. Nonetheless, according to Brownhill (1983:21), recent writings in the sociology and history of science take the idea of relativism further by arguing that objective knowledge is not possible, that "we cannot talk of objective bodies of knowledge but only of subjective beliefs or at best intersubjective beliefs" (cf Chapter 2.3.4).

3.3.3 THE "WORTH" OF KNOWLEDGE

The important question is *Why do we value knowledge?* Related questions are the following: *Does knowledge have intrinsic worth?*, *Do all kinds of knowledge have the same worth?*, and *Can knowledge be discriminatory?* The answer to all these questions, according to Paterson (Degenhardt 1982:10), is that knowledge "gains worth by being about something that itself has worth". Consequently the controversy about the comparative worth of different kinds of knowledge, for example, that *practical* knowledge and *theoretical* knowledge do not have the same worth; or that *objective* knowledge has more, or less, worth than *subjective* knowledge; or that *science* "is the ultimate in knowledge", takes on a new dimension insofar as the "worth" associated with knowledge may be susceptible to changes in the power ascribed to knowledge (Degenhardt 1982:7-9,18). It is therefore important to look at conventional views of knowledge and its "worth".

3.3.4 CONVENTIONAL VIEWS OF KNOWLEDGE

Although knowledge is often treated as a "disembodied entity", and it is assumed that "knowledge is impressed like some ghostly rubber stamp on a passive humanity, and by force of rhetoric terms like *hegemony*, *dominance*, *monopoly of discourse*, and *social control* are invoked to sustain the assumption" (Freidson 1988:x), this view does not allow for the "actual connection" of knowledge "with concrete human events and experiences in the real world". Neither does this view allow for the fact that key terms are often grounded "in human activities" and acquire *social meaning* (Freidson 1988:ix).

During the latter part of the twentieth century an increased fascination with the role of knowledge in human affairs focused in part on the way in which the "worth" of knowledge is determined by its social context; the way knowledge is "held by powerful groups as a possession and an instrument of their power" in order to validate the justification of truth; hence, the extent to which the "position" of any such group (in the balance of power in society) grants them power to determine the "worth" of knowledge (Popper quoted in Stenhouse 1978:21).

The traditional curriculum is mostly concerned with the best way to teach students any given body of knowledge. Curricular knowledge is seen as something managed by administrators and teachers – usually broken up into units and then presented to students – accompanied by aims and objectives. Modern sociologists of education challenge this. For them the most important question is not HOW to transfer knowledge effectively, but WHAT kinds of knowledge are to be included in the curriculum and WHY and in the interest of WHOM? (Bennett & LeCompte 1990:100). Knowledge is seen as "unevenly distributed among social and economic classes, occupational groups, different age groups, and groups of different power. Therefore, some groups have access to knowledge distributed to them and not distributed to others. The obverse of this is also probably true. The *lack* of certain kinds of knowledge – where any particular group stands in the complex process of cultural preservation and distribution – is related, no doubt, to the absence in that group of certain kinds of political and economic power in society" (Apple 1990:16).

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Thus, according to Bernstein (Taylor 1993:2; italics added by this author) "how a society selects, classifies, distributes, transmits and evaluates the *educational knowledge* it considers to be public, *reflects both the distribution of power and the principle of social control*" in that society. At the same time, according to Bowen (1981:543), Illich maintains that "knowledge itself, which once was generated in real situations, becomes processed and packaged" into "commodities". Furthermore, that most students at school are alienated by school knowledge which for them is meaningless and remote, but by which they are socially controlled.

All this has given rise to a growing perception in the social consciousness that there is a direct relationship between knowledge (and its "worth") and the power structure in society. The implication is that, because knowledge is seen as socially constructed, the "seemingly absolute status of the knowledge which has come to be institutionalized in the school curriculum" becomes problematical (Whitty 1985:14). However, this brings into play the age-old problem of the relativity of knowledge which is closely related to the relativity of concepts (Nel 1983:23) associated with the human link between knowledge and truth (Freidson 1988:ix). Nevertheless, the influence of these ideas has been such that it has brought widespread recognition of the fact that knowledge is embedded in the social reality, that the true nature (and "worth") of knowledge is determined by human relations and, consequently, that the neutrality of curricular knowledge cannot be taken for granted. Moreover, as the "truth" (or the assumptions underlying the "truth") of curricular knowledge (i.e. the power of knowledge) is socially constructed, it is to a large extent dependent upon a specific social reality and as such subject to subtle changes. The "truth" of curricular knowledge (and the balance of power it supports) is therefore not ultimately fixed or universal, but contestable and, hence, the focus of demands in the struggle for knowledge power.

3.4 THE CONCEPT OF KNOWLEDGE AS POWER

Despite the old adage "knowledge is power", it is not an easy task to attempt an explanation of what the power of knowledge is. To say the least, it is a highly controversial issue (Hazlett 1985:172). In an effort

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to determine the power of knowledge, both the kind of knowledge and the power intended are important. As this study has already established that we are dealing with curricular knowledge, it is the concept of power that needs further clarification.

3.4.1 WHAT IS POWER?

The Concise Oxford Dictionary (1983:804) defines "power" as the "ability to do or to act". According to *The Social Science Encyclopedia* (1985:635) "definitions of power are legion" but to "the extent that there is any commonly accepted formulation, power is understood as concerned with the bringing about of consequences".

It is acknowledged that power is part of everyday life and that it exists almost universally, but that power is evident only when it is put into action. Foucault (1986:216) suggests that power is "not a function of consent". Neither is it in itself "a renunciation of freedom", or "a transference of rights", or "the power of each and all delegated to a few". However, this does not preclude the possibility that "consent may be a condition for the existence or the maintenance of power" insofar as the relationship may be the manifestation of "a prior" or "permanent consent", although power is not by its "nature the manifestation of consensus".

In any context, people generally know what is meant when it is said that an individual or a group "has power", is "in power" or is "powerful". What is problematical is the "scope of an agent's power (the values or issues over which it ranges), its *magnitude* (how much difference he can make with respect to those issues), its *domain* (the number of persons affected by its exercise)" and how these three are *related* in terms of authority, persuasion or influence (Connelly 1983:86). It may be said that the "main *bases of power*, then, underlying relations of dominance and subordination, *involve exclusions from and access to necessary ... resources, activities or skills and positions of command*" (Beetham 1991:50; italics added by this author). In other words, as Beetham (1991:56) points out, "relations of dominance and subordination are determined by rules of exclusion and access, which makes key resources, activities and positions into a *means of power*, and regulate

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who may gain access to them and on what conditions ... according to established rules". Consequently, the actual power is dependent upon the distinction between "power to", which means the power to attain certain objectives, and "power over", in which the focus is on the receiving end. While "power over" implies that the receiving agent must, in some way or other be limited or effected by the exercise of power, "ability to" can generally be substituted for "power to" without any change in the meaning of the statement. "Power to" can be seen in terms of the classical definition of power by Hobbes, as "the power of a man ... is his present means [in this case knowledge] to obtain some future end" (Connelly 1983:87).

3.4.2 KNOWLEDGE AS POWER

Central to the concept of the power of knowledge is therefore its power in the bringing about of consequences. However, as Freidson (1988:xi) argues, "knowledge cannot be connected to power without becoming embodied in concrete human beings who in turn must be sustained by organized institutions. By those means knowledge can influence affairs systematically". The important question is what the relationship is "between those who create, transmit, and apply that knowledge and the actual exercise of power". Is it possible to be in a position of power by virtue of the possession of knowledge? And in what way is it possible to say that knowledge has power? (Freidson 1988:1).

It may be said that all human beings everywhere may have some kind of knowledge, but that "not all people have the same body of knowledge" (Freidson 1988:2). It may also be said that in any social reality a particular body of knowledge may be common to all while other bodies of knowledge may be available only to some people. Knowledge is "an instrument of power, a source for guiding and facilitating the exercise of power" insofar as the possession or the access to certain bodies of knowledge puts certain individuals or pressure groups in possession of the "ability" to influence, manipulate, coerce or control the life chances (in other words the economic, social and political mobility) of any other group or individual; or that, by virtue of being in possession of "superior" knowledge, an individual or group has power over another group or individual insofar as such an individual or group is in a

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position to manipulate and control the destiny of others (Emmerij 1974:vii). In this way superior knowledge is used as a means to exercise power; as a tool "for the purpose of controlling or dominating everyday lives, shaping them to the purposes of the state", the economy or the ideals of a specific social pressure group or the environment (Freidson 1988:5).

An important aspect of the power to dominate is "the capacity of an agent or agents to secure specific outcomes through their intervention (or non-intervention) in the course of events" (Mouton 1988:44); in other words to accomplish or prevent some future end - or change. Implicit in this is *the importance of the "truth" revealed (or not revealed)* in such an intervention (or non-intervention). This has a direct bearing on the "selection" of the knowledge content of the curriculum, which means that, in one way or another, knowledge (or the selected content of the curriculum) deals with power (Apple 1987:163). This is evident in *three important and distinct ways*. In the *first* place curricular knowledge is related to power insofar as not all knowledge - not everyone's knowledge - is taught in school. Some groups, especially those groups who feel that they are discriminated against because of race, sex, class, or prejudice, argue that power is manifest in the way they are either not represented or misrepresented in the curriculum. In the *second* place the power of knowledge is evident in the sense that the curriculum is associated with being a selective mechanism in the distribution or redistribution of power insofar as schools themselves are fundamentally important sorting and selecting devices for the larger society. Hence the power of knowledge is associated with the degree to which knowledge, in the formal and the hidden curriculum, is regarded as a help or a hindrance in social and economic mobility, which in turn is closely related to the hierarchy in the power structure. The *third* significant facet of the power of knowledge is the interpersonal sense of power dependent upon the power to change or withstand curricular changes. This is evident in the way some groups seeking change have in mind the interest of the students generally, others wish the curriculum to serve the needs of a specific interest group at the expense of a large section of the community. Some groups are even more reactionary; they aim at using the curriculum as a "platform for their own social ... beliefs" (Apple 1987:164).

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Mouton (1988:44) points out that in any society the value of truth is closely related to social and political power. While politics can be broadly described as having a significant influence on the balance of power in a community (Mouton 1988:44), politicisation of the curriculum can be defined as using the curriculum "to serve the ends of significant power groups, whether the church, the state, [the economy,] or some body, even the 'educational establishment', so that explicitly or *implicitly* employed techniques of inculcation, indoctrination, and loaded selection of material, dictate the content, values and attitudes transmitted" in schools (Marsden 1989:509).

The preceding views focus attention on the fact that there is a close relationship between the cultural distribution (knowledge) in society and the distribution and control of whatever is of social, economic and political importance, in other words *power* (Apple 1990:16); that different types of knowledge is associated with different types of "status" and the *lack* of certain kinds of knowledge is associated with the *lack* of certain kinds of social, political and economic power in society (Apple 1990:16); and, that possession of certain kinds of knowledge is associated with the ability (power) to control the school curriculum and, hence, the power to determine the specific place of any group or individual in the power structure of a society (Lagemann 1987:207).

Thus *two important aspects* of the power of knowledge are evident. In the *first* place, knowledge is power only insofar as it is a means of power, in other words, knowledge is not power in itself (Freidson 1988:9). In the *second* place, the power of knowledge cannot be isolated from the attempt to gain control of the "hearts and minds of people" for a specific purpose. It follows then that demands for knowledge power cannot be fully appreciated without looking at how power functions inside and outside the school. Although there are disagreements on this issue, it is generally acknowledged that:

- power is founded on a particular basis (such as wealth, status, knowledge, charisma, force, authority);
- there are different forms of power (such as coercion or control);
- there are different uses of power (such as individual or community ends, political ends, economic ends) (The Social Science Encyclopedia 1985:635,636).

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Consequently the power of knowledge comes to be associated with any of these aspects according to the theoretical or practical interests of whoever is involved in the struggle for power (The Social Science Encyclopedia 1985:636). At the same time it is this *connection* that is enhancing the power of curricular knowledge in the eyes of those groups struggling for power (Dalin 1978:28). Be that as it may, at more than one level the power ascribed to knowledge in the school curriculum is a source of conflict as most individuals (and groups) do not want to lose privileges and advantages conferred on them. It is clear that the power of knowledge is, therefore, perceived to be "a vitally important part of ... relations of domination and resistance" in more than one way (Collins 1991:221).

3.4.3 DIFFERENT TRADITIONS IN THE POWER OF KNOWLEDGE (TRUTH)

According to Michel Foucault (1978:93) power is manifest in a set of "general matrix of force" relations: the power attributed to knowledge is dependent upon a complex set of "rules" in any given society at any given time. The same influences that succeed in affecting or changing the "general matrix of force" relations will eventually challenge the "rules" by which knowledge is legitimised and will therefore change the definition of reality with which "truth" is associated. This means that the "truth" associated with knowledge is at the same time transformed significantly. It follows then that insofar as we accept a specific definition of reality – or a specific selection of knowledge as "truth" – we are putting power in the hands of a specific group or person. Consequently the power we ascribe to knowledge (or our definition of "truth") provides the conceptual framework within which we live and work (Foucault 1986:221).

The *power of knowledge* is therefore *legitimised by a conceptual framework* (social conscience or metaphor of power); in other words, a "*relationship* justified in terms of shared beliefs, regulated according to understood conventions and confirmed through the expression of consent" (Beetham 1991:31). Related to this is the great influence of "traditions", trends, or metaphors of power in society, on the legitimisation of "truth". Metaphors of power change and each era has

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its own interpretation of a "legitimate" paradigm of truth (Van Niekerk 1994). For example, the dominant epistemological "traditions" in twentieth century philosophy of social science are the following, with the focus in each case on the distinctive metaphor of power for the particular paradigm:

- the positivist tradition - the metaphor of therapeutic or "medical" power as its central theme;
- the tradition of Enlightenment - the metaphor of illumination or the enlightening potential of human reason;
- the critical tradition - the metaphor of political emancipation and liberation;
- the radical tradition - the metaphor of transformation or the reinterpretation of meaning and authority (Mouton 1988:48).

Some of the major "traditions" on the authority of "truth" - or the "link" between knowledge and power - in the Western cultural ideal throughout the ages (*cf* Chapter 2) are the following: the human mind or wise men (mostly male); religious leaders (mostly male); the state (mostly male); the elite (mostly male); the possessors of scientific knowledge (mostly male); and, lastly, anyone in possession of "relevant" knowledge in terms any particular definition of relevance - the emerging tradition of the ordinary man and woman as the authority on truth. In each case the power of knowledge is associated with

- * the power of the human "expert" (or "link") who is then to manipulate, establish, reinforce or transform the existing power structure (in terms of the prevailing or an emerging paradigm of truth);
- * its usefulness to maintain the "accepted" or to implement an emerging metaphor of power;
- * its usefulness to effect a democratic balance of power in terms of the prevailing or the emerging conception of "democracy".

Any attempt to maintain, be critical of, or transform the prevailing power structure is seen to be dependent upon access to, as well as the availability of, the "relevant" knowledge. So, for example the concept of "democracy", which for centuries has been associated with the emancipation of human beings from various forms of "oppression" (in terms of one of the above "links" in the authority of "truth"), has now been expanded to include the non-human world (environment) as well.

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In each era, and for each separate group, the power of knowledge is located in that group's conception of which authority legitimises knowledge; that is in direct relationship to the theoretical framework underlying the conception of the power of knowledge. In other words, the power attributed to certain kinds of knowledge in the "social conscience" – or the extent of the "expression of consent" – will remain stable in any group, community, nation, or even groups of communities until such time as a major change of conception or paradigm shift – in other words, a change in (or even withdrawal of) the "expression of consent" – takes place. Hence powershifts take place when metaphors of power change (or vice versa). In times of transition, the struggle for power will gain momentum while such a struggle is trying to establish, by various ways and means – also through demands on the school curriculum – the new conception of "legitimate" knowledge power (or the new "expression of consent"). The change in perception may be a manifestation of "normal" changes, but it may also be a manifestation of "contrived" changes, in which case the pressure on the school curriculum will be much greater. The existing curriculum will still be acceptable if it is fashioned in accordance with the perception of "knowledge power" subscribed to by a significant section of society. Nevertheless, the relationship between knowledge and power reflected in the curriculum will usually, as is characteristic of a school curriculum, lag behind the relationship between knowledge and power evident in the community (or social reality).

It must be stated here that not all "normal" changes in the relationship between knowledge and power will be acceptable to all sections of society. Neither will all "contrived" changes be educationally unsound. The important point to make is that whether changes are seen as "normal" or "contrived" will depend upon the conception of the relation between knowledge and power in the eye of the beholder. In the end, however, that group which maintains (or can control) the government will try to transform/reform the curriculum according to their perception of the relation of knowledge to power. Any group which can either gain enough influence (usually through the media and "sensitization" in the Freirian sense) to change part (or all) of the public perception about a public issue or, alternatively, is in possession of ways and means (or knowledge) to challenge the stability of a

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dominant group, has the power to "demand" changes in the relationship between power and knowledge in the school curriculum.

While exploring the relationship between powershifts and knowledge, Alvin Toffler (1990) comes up with some valuable insights - and adds a new dimension to the relationship between power and knowledge.

Toffler (1990:12-13), who points out that, basically, power is "neither good nor bad" but "a dimension of virtually all human relationships", comes to the conclusion that

firstly, the ultimate source of social power seems to be knowledge and a combination of violence (actual or implied) and wealth; and,

secondly, it is important to realise that it is knowledge that is becoming the pivotal point in most decision-making processes.

In other words, knowledge is becoming the pivotal point in the balance of power insofar as *relevant knowledge has the power of persuasion* - especially in terms of its credibility to the recipient (Beetham 1991:106). Hence the power of knowledge is increasingly seen in relation to its power of being a lever in any conflict of power. Consequently - as knowledge is becoming so important in determining the outcome of any conflict of power - it is not possible to be part of any decision-making process without being in possession, or having access to, "relevant" knowledge. Hence the power of knowledge is associated with its role, more than with its possession, in becoming part - or even dominating - the power structure in a society: with "the way in which the power of ownership secures control" and is instrumental in determining "the 'rules of power' for society as a whole" (Beetham 1991:52,54), in other words, with its role in justifying or challenging the balance of power in any social reality.

Toffler (1990:18) maintains that the important powershift that is taking place currently is that "knowledge has gone from being an adjunct of money power and muscle power, to being their very essence". This is mainly because knowledge has turned out to be "not only the source of the highest-quality power, but also the most important ingredient of force and wealth" (Toffler 1990:18). What people are realising more and more is that both force and money, "for all practical concerns, is finite" (Toffler 1990:19). Furthermore, that "both force and wealth are the property of the strong and the rich" while knowledge "can be grasped

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by the weak and the poor as well". The power of knowledge, therefore, takes on a new dimension in terms of a growing perception that "knowledge is the most democratic source of power" (Toffler 1990:20).

In the light of the power ascribed to knowledge it becomes clear why the school curriculum is the centre of the struggle for power and why "every power-holder ... wants to control the quantity, quality, and distribution [of knowledge] within his or her domain" (Toffler 1990:20). However, generally, the struggle for knowledge power - and the struggle to have *access* to relevant curricular knowledge - is *crucial* not only for the self-determination of individuals and of groups, but also because it is a prerequisite for a *democratic balance of power* insofar as it is *the power of ownership* of "relevant" knowledge that determines the balance of power in any social reality.

3.5 SUMMARY

The power of knowledge is associated with its *purpose* and with the person or group in *control* of that purpose in *two opposing ways*. On the *one* hand, it is associated with the basic ideal of educational knowledge. In very simple terms knowledge has the power to free the child from ignorance (definitions of which are varied and will in effect determine the power associated with knowledge). What is important, though, is that the power of knowledge in the educational ideal is closely associated with reason; with the power to think for oneself and to execute one's decisions with reason. In other words, to be able to control one's own destiny in such a way that the future of both man and the world is ensured.

On the *other* hand, and on the opposite side of the scale, the power of knowledge is associated with the process of gaining complete control of both the hearts and the minds of people; to prevent them from thinking for themselves; to use them as tools in serving the ends of a specific power group.

Nonetheless, the (ongoing) struggle for knowledge power is important in the sense that it prevents the school curriculum from stagnation.

CHAPTER 4

THE STRUGGLE FOR POWER: FEMINISM, THE GAY MOVEMENT AND PEOPLE'S EDUCATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the development of mass education up to the present time three crucial *divisions* can be discerned. These are social class, ability and sex. Because education never takes place in a vacuum, the existence of these divisions has led to the realisation that the school curriculum, as Apple (1990:viii) says, "define[s] some groups' knowledge as worthwhile to pass on, while other groups' culture and knowledge hardly see the light of day". The result is that various socio-ideological groups, struggling for power on the premise that "every human being is important regardless of racial, national, social, economic or mental status", claim equal access to all cultural resources – including curricular knowledge – as a fundamental human right (Apple 1990:viii).

Hence "certain groups", who feel they are alienated by a school curriculum which is not relevant to their perception of the social reality, claim that the *school curriculum* is an instrument of *discrimination* – and the main source of "disadvantage in the competition for wealth, education, work, power and prestige" (The Guinness Encyclopedia 1990:259). Consequently, it is the degree of power ascribed to certain fields of knowledge that is being criticised.

4.2 INFLUENCES ON THE DEMANDS FOR CHANGES IN CURRICULAR KNOWLEDGE

4.2.1 (BASIC) HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE POWER STRUGGLE

In the twentieth century, what has traditionally been known as "natural" rights came to be known as human rights. The "natural" rights to life, liberty and property were identified by John Locke in 1689, the same year that the Bill of Rights was enacted by the English

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Parliament. This proved to have far-reaching effects on the schooling system throughout the Western world. In July 1776 the Declaration of Independence of thirteen American States declared that "all men are created equal; that they are endowed by the Creator with certain inalienable rights" of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness (Cranston 1973:2). In time more rights were mentioned in official government statements, for example, the "right of vote not to be denied ... on account of race, colour, or previous condition of servitude" as well as the right of "liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression". Liberty is here defined as "being unrestrained in doing anything that does not interfere with the liberty of another" (quoted in Cranston 1973:2). Consequently, when the United Nations was established after the Second World War – a war which was to have a profound influence on the established social and cultural reality – Sir Winston Churchill immediately gave attention to the question of human rights.

In time human rights achieved almost universal recognition. But even at its most popular, the notion of human rights has never gone unchallenged. Critics include, for example, Hegel and – in the twentieth century – especially the positivists. Moreover, the ideologies of both nationalism and communism oppose the idea of the individual being more important than the state. Marx believed that humanity would come into its own only when men do not perceive of themselves as individuals with inalienable rights (Cranston 1973:3).

It has to be stated that the concept that all men have rights can be ambiguous. What kind of rights? Are they positive rights which can be enforced by law, or moral rights which cannot be enforced by law? Another uncertainty is whether man "has" rights or whether he "ought to have" rights. Thus human rights are rights perceived as "universal" in terms of justice only as, for example, the "universal" right of liberty will be differently conceptualised in different societies. To complicate matters a "universal" right, such as the "right to education", cannot be "earned or acquired by special enactment, nor bought by any specific contractual undertaking" (Cranston 1973:23). Moreover, critics claim that the concept of "equality", as it is taken up in the concept of human rights – that is to say based on the premise that all men are

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born equal – is only a "fiction of equality" or sameness, and hence difficult to implement in a school curriculum. Natural differences between people are so great, that even if there is equality in one instance, other important "inequalities" might either be shamelessly ignored or not addressed at all.

Although it is difficult to explain precisely what human rights entail, the concept of such rights has gained almost universal acceptance mainly because "doctrines of human rights [have] served as the bases of revolutions in France and America" (The Guinness Encyclopedia 1990:290). The outcome is:

firstly, a growing conviction that all human beings have basic rights according to a higher law as is reflected by the accent in documents like the Convention against Discrimination in Education (UNESCO 1960) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations 1989) (White Paper 1995:41); and,

secondly, a general impatience with privileges which include those privileges associated with a school curriculum perceived to authorise the exclusive access of certain groups to the power structure in society.

Nonetheless, the possibility remains that demands for the extension of individual rights, and personal access to the power structure within any given political community, may be confused with the demand for the implementation of human rights in the school curriculum (*cf* Chapter 5.2.1).

4.2.2 THREE "DIVISIONS" AND THE POWER STRUGGLE

While the hierarchical classification of social differences is the foundation of horizontal divisions in society, vertical divisions are made in terms of physical and cultural differences (The Guinness Encyclopedia 1990:258). Such "divisions", are often blamed for the perceived "discrimination" evident in the accepted bodies of knowledge in the school curriculum (The Guinness Encyclopedia 1990:259).

Deem (Walker 1983:2), who argues that *three major and crucial "divisions"* – social class, ability and sex – can be identified in the development of mass education in the Western world, gives a description

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of the relationship of these "divisions" to the struggle for knowledge power. According to him, "social class" is associated with various privileges or access to privileges – mainly as a result of the possession of knowledge or the access to knowledge – which, at any specific time, determine the status of a group, or an individual, in the social hierarchy. Moreover, social class is intricately linked to social, economic, racial and even gender "privileges" which in turn are linked to the possession or lack of relevant knowledge. In Western societies the "division" of social class is interpreted mainly in terms of the Western cultural ideal of the authority of truth. This ideal includes patriarchy – the dominant position of the white European male – and appreciation of science, and scientific achievements, as both the authority on truth and the basis of a sound economy.

Also the "division" of "sex", initially associated with gender division yet later extended to include sexual orientation as well, is regarded as important in determining social status. Thus, both on account of the traditional "superiority" of the male in terms of male/female issues, as well as on account of the "inferiority" of female attributes in terms of sexual orientation, the "division" on a sexual basis is central to various struggles for knowledge power.

Lastly, because "ability" in terms of the curriculum has come to mean the "ability" to assimilate Western European culture, this "division" influences the power structure in terms of social class, gender, sex, People's Education, the economy and the environment. Consequently, the struggle for knowledge power in the school curriculum aims at breaking down any one or more of these three "divisions": the liberation from oppression by the perceived restrictions of any such "division" apparent in the knowledge content of the school curriculum. The concern is with the transformation of curricular knowledge so that a disempowered "division" in society will be empowered by the knowledge content of the school curriculum on the premise that basic human rights are fundamental to the democratic ideal in school knowledge (The Guinness Encyclopedia 1990:258).

4.2.3 CRITICAL DEMOCRACY AND THE POWER STRUGGLE

In an article *Education for Critical Democracy* Jesse Goodman (1989:88) tries to explain the concept of "critical democracy" (cf Chapter 5.2.3). Democracy, usually seen as "good" in terms of offering representation, faith in the will of the majority, providing certain checks and balances and affording protection to express minority viewpoints, is noticeable for the relative "little effort on the part of the average citizen" (Goodman 1989:89). Goodman (1989:90) points out that Dewey distinguishes between democracy as an ideal and democracy as a form of government. The problem is that democracy is mostly seen in terms of politics and forms of government, and not as a dynamic process in which people participate. Research by, among others, Braverman in 1974 and Wood in 1984 (Goodman 1989:90) show that political democracy is placing on people constraints to "full participation in their lives" (Goodman 1989:90).

Critical democracy aims at the expansion of democratic participation in all realms of social and school life. This will be done by giving all the members of social institutions – public or private – a "voice" and the opportunity to communicate. Fundamental to this is the "democratic" distribution of "knowledge" (Goodman 1989:91). Critical democracy thus implies that "knowledge" is not the prerogative of a chosen few, but that "social arrangements have to be developed within socio-historical context" (Goodman 1989:92). This means that when "groups of people have suffered historically from economic, social, and/or psychological oppression, there is an accepted responsibility to alter current societal arrangements to redress previous inequalities whether based upon class, race, religion, ethnic heritage, gender, or sexual preference" (Goodman 1989:92). Appreciation for the cultural differences and self-expression of groups is self-evident. Thus one of the main concerns addressed by critical democracy is the cultural distribution of power; in other words, the critical focus is upon access to, and the availability of, knowledge in terms of the democratic ideal that all people are born equal.

4.2.4 SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND THE POWER STRUGGLE

Davidson and Gordon (1979:7) describe social movements as "continuing efforts to promote new values" and to effect or prevent social change by the propagation of a different interpretation of existing bodies of knowledge. Nevertheless there might be "disagreement among those within it about where change is most needed, who 'the enemy' is, and what the new ideal world should look like" (Davidson & Gordon 1979:3). According to Hegedus (McKay & Romm 1992:x), social movements can be seen - especially at present - as *global phenomena* in that the same trends are discernible irrespective of the social reality in which they operate. Basic to all social movements is the propagation of cognitive values that portray a specific picture of the world; a body of knowledge that serves to "*empower as well as depower*" (Apple & Weis 1986:28) insofar as it aims towards direct participation in the politics of knowledge. The aim of the new social movements, "which include gay rights movements, ... black rights movements, women's movements, ecology movements and the like", is to "deepen democracy beyond formal parliamentary party democracy"; in other words, to democratise knowledge insofar as knowledge is not the prerogative of certain "privileged" groups (Carrim & Sayed 1992/93:23).

As Wexler (1987:134) argues, the aim of social movements has to be seen in terms of struggles for knowledge power: the reinterpretation of "symbols" of power and the "truth" of knowledge, in terms of new or emerging paradigms of "truth", so that a seemingly final "classification" system acquires a new meaning and becomes the object of negotiation. Therefore it is important to remember that ideas generated by social movements are not orderly. Ideas are influenced by the social and political tension within society, as well as modified and determined by existing and emerging social and cultural interests (Rowbotham 1990:295). The significance of social movements, however, "is that they can pressurise the state because of their civil society strengths", sometimes even "irrespective of their political orientations" (Carrim & Sayed 1992/93:23).

4.3 FEMINISM AND THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM

4.3.1 INTRODUCTION

The important questions are: what does it mean to be female or male in Western societies and are these definitions changing? (Davidson & Gordon 1979:1). Hence of major concern is, *firstly*, whether a power structure is evident in the school curriculum, and if so, how does it influence the educational experience of women; and, *secondly*, whether and how women are restrained or controlled by a school curriculum which allegedly reproduces and sustains gender differences regarding the identities, perceptions and cultural values reflecting the concept of male domination (in the balance of power) in the Western cultural ideal.

4.3.2 WHAT IS FEMINISM?

4.3.2.1 SEXUAL IDENTITY

Sexual identity is a "complex, but fundamental feature" on which the self-concept of a human being is dependent. Richard Green (1987:5-6) goes so far as to claim that to understand sexual identity is to understand human behaviour. He also identifies the following as the three components of sexual identity:

- * *anatomic identity* - this is simply the identity of a person as either male or female in biological terms;
- * *gender-role behaviour, sex-typed behaviour or masculinity and femininity* - according to Green "these are the culturally fixed signals that discriminate males from females", in other words the behaviour patterns culturally associated with either masculine or feminine behaviour (or the roles society has created around the anatomic or "sexual" identity) which has become the fundamental category for the organisation of human relations;
- * *sexual orientation* - this category is based upon the "anatomic identity" of the persons that are found "erotically exciting", the two common sexual orientations being heterosexuality and homosexuality.

4.3.2.2 FEMINISM

Feminism is a broad term used to describe movements for the social liberation of women and based upon a general belief in the equality of

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the genders and, hence, in common resistance (irrespective of cultural background) to all the different forms of male domination (Harding 1987:188). Current *Feminism* can be seen as part, and a continuation, of a *long history of general campaigning for specific political, legal, social and educational rights* for women. During the latter part of the twentieth century Feminism "represents *the* major change in social thinking and politics because Feminism *radically questions* our understanding of 'men' and 'women' and the social structures that maintain their differences" (Humm 1992:xi). Based on the assumption that "gender" refers to social consciousness and "sex" to biology, Feminism questions the *culturally fixed signals that discriminate males from females* perceived to be instrumental in the domination of females by males. Although Feminism, as an organised movement struggling for knowledge power, is of comparatively recent origin, it has thrived in many countries and has succeeded in bringing about significant improvements in the lives of women.

According to Humm (1992:11) two distinct "waves" can be discerned in the history of Feminism. The *first wave* is concerned with "inequalities" and the striving for "equality" between the genders. This includes a striving for equal social, political and economic rights, as well as equal educational opportunities in that boys and girls will have equal access to curricular knowledge (The Guinness Encyclopedia 1990:292). The underlying assumption is that "biological differences between sexes are not in themselves sufficient to limit individuals to the great extent that social rules dictate"; and, that discrimination against girls in terms of gender differentiation has to be eliminated (Davidson & Gordon 1979:1).

During the *second wave* the concern is with women's "difference", which is used to challenge the acceptance of the "normality" of "a patriarchal world", insofar as "women's inequality is not simply the result of social restrictions but stems from a controlled and organised ... network of meanings not all of which are institutionally visible" (Humm 1992:11-13). Underlying second wave Feminism, therefore, is a growing perception of "women's power as agents of knowledge" insofar as knowledge is deemed to be a "vitally important part of the social relations of domination and resistance" (Collins 1991:221). The charge made by Feminism is that, simply on account of being female, there are unnecessary limitations on the opportunities for girls and women which result in "silencing" the

voices of women in the "knowledge-producing power structures" in society (Bozalek & Sunde 1993/94:73). The concern of Feminism is to challenge the "truth" of knowledge about women "from the strength of" women's "own experience"; to reveal the "powerful realities of gender difference"; to legitimise women's "differences" and give a "voice to a new and autonomous woman"; to create and control a body of knowledge (and school curriculum) in which the "status" of women (and subjectivity) is accepted on equal terms to that of males (and objectivity) (Humm 1992:11-12). One of the more recent developments in second wave Feminism is *eco-Feminism*, which is concerned about the distinction of human attributes in masculine and feminine categories (cf Chapters 5.4.2.3 & 5.4.4). Fundamental to eco-Feminism is that all human beings have both male and female attributes and that, if and when this is integrated into the social conscience (cf Chapter 3.4.3), male domination of the female - as well as of nature - will disappear. In this way society will be democratic and the world a healthier place to live in (Swart 1994:82-83). Another recent strand of second wave Feminism is the emerging "visibility" of *Black Feminist* thought in which, according to Patricia Collins (1991:xiv), the most important conceptual stance is "the both/and ... stance", that is "to possess both an Afrocentric and a feminist consciousness" insofar as it "is for Black women in that it empowers Black women for political action" (Collins 1991:32).

Underlying both these waves of Feminism, is the conviction that women are unequal to men because (traditionally) men have both created and justified the "meanings of equality" (Humm 1992:13); that the oppression of women is tied to perceptions about their sexuality. It is stressed that "differences" between the genders are not so much part of intrinsic gender differences as "an intrinsic effect of that identity's construction" in the social conscience (Humm 1992:13). The implication is that, as gender appropriate behaviour is constructed under specific social conditions, the availability of "relevant" (or transformed) knowledge will, to a large extent, serve to eliminate all social "limitations" on the social, political and economic mobility of women (Wolpe 1993/94:1).

Hence, Feminism is a struggle about meanings: a struggle against the dominant and established systems of meaning and the position of gender identities (perceived to be bound to the status of scientific knowledge in particular) which they attempt to "consciously change" (Humm 1992:1).

Although there are Feminist movements all over the world, they have never been a unified whole. Major emphases in these movements vary greatly and include: women should be more like men; women are superior to men; men and women should be free to act either "masculine" or "feminine" depending upon the situation; "men and women should share authority in society through sharing political (or social) power" (Davidson & Gordon 1979:191). While Marxist groups, for example, tend to view women as "one more oppressed group in society", radical Feminism emphasises that women "are the one group always oppressed in society" (Davidson & Gordon 1979:190). Nevertheless, contemporary Feminism – although divided on specific priorities and objectives – mostly operates in the critical tradition, central to which is the perception that, in order to eradicate "oppression" and secure control of the knowledge production processes in society, it will be necessary to change the status of women by breaking down the discriminatory "divisions" evident in curricular knowledge (Davidson & Gordon 1979:191). Objectives are divided among those concerned with gaining equal rights, those adopting an anti-sexist stance, and those aligning themselves with a wide range of political and/or critical social movements striving to transform the power structure in society so that (in terms of basic human rights) all women will be humanised, given a "voice" in the sense that all women will have equal access to "all" the power structures in any social reality (The Guinness Encyclopedia 1990:293). Radical Feminism, in particular, believes that a transformed body of knowledge (and the ensuing economic and political rights for women) will be instrumental in transforming themselves and the world; instrumental in securing a more democratic balance of power in society (Humm 1991:15).

4.3.3 SOCIETY, EDUCATION AND THE STATUS OF WOMEN

4.3.3.1 TOWARDS THE EQUALITY OF THE GENDERS

To extend educational opportunities for girls has been one of the great concerns of the twentieth century in America, Britain and Europe. But, despite the 1948 Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations) and the 1989 Declaration of the Rights of the Child (United Nations) which stressed that both boys and girls were entitled to the same educational opportunities, there was, until the end of the 1970s, a great disparity in

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the educational opportunities offered to boys and girls in most Western countries (Wilson 1991c:2). The prevailing perception was that boys needed education because traditionally boys, as the breadwinners (in the traditional nuclear family), went out to work while girls stayed at home and raised the family. Gradually, however, co-education - initially seen as the solution to the problem of equal rights in education - was introduced throughout the Western world (Wilson 1991b:203).

Notwithstanding the fact that the 1960 Convention against Discrimination in Education (UNESCO) focused on discrimination against girls in the school curriculum, it was only after the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (United Nations) - to which all Europe had to agree - that the issue of gender discrimination became a widespread concern in schools (Wilson 1991c:2). The status of women subsequently became the focus of attention in most European countries, for example Belgium and Germany, where the curriculum had not changed since the introduction of co-ed schools (Plateau 1991:15). Likewise, in both Britain and America a complex legal apparatus "for tackling the thorny issue of sex discrimination in schooling and in the related area of organization of employment" was developed (David 1983:146). Yet, in all these countries it was the structure and not the content of the school curriculum that was the first to receive attention.

Gradually, however, the complex socio-economic changes after the Second World War were having an influence on the social reality as well as on the perceived aim and content of the school curriculum throughout the Western world. Progressive economic growth, renewed interest in civil and human rights, widespread Feminist political action and the student uprisings of the 1960s and 1970s brought in their wake a dawning realisation that gender discrimination was evident, not only in the structure of the curriculum, but in the actual knowledge content of the school curriculum (David 1983:145). The result was that clauses to the effect that gender discrimination should be eliminated from school curricula became part of most government proposals. Nevertheless, despite official recognition of gender equality and legislation to prevent discrimination against women - for example the 1975 Sex Discrimination Act in Britain - some critics still viewed the attention given to gender issues as 'faddish concerns' of 'looney leftists' (Sikes 1993:11). Hence,

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although the 1975 British Act provided for the opportunity to take legal action, not one instance of gender discrimination was reported in over 15 years in Britain. Recent research has shown that, on the whole, the school curriculum, as well as teachers, accept gender differences not as discrimination, but as "normal" (Sikes 1993:11).

Consequently it is argued that school curricula of the 1990s still discriminate against girls as a group. Still reflected in government proposals, therefore, is a concern to eliminate such discrimination (Sikes 1993:11). In South Africa, for example, in the White Paper on Training and Education in a Democratic South Africa (1995:44) it is stated that "no person shall be unfairly discriminated against, directly or indirectly". In a separate section entitled, "A Gender Equity Unit", it is explicitly stated that the "patriarchal culture" that dominates "gender relations, in many schools ... exhibit sexism and male chauvinism" and that this "must change" (White Paper 1995:53-54). The perception is that negative attitudes against women are mainly the result of ignorance; that the availability of knowledge to make informed decisions will be instrumental in removing discrimination (Siraj-Blatchford 1993:7).

4.3.3.2 FEMININITY AND SEXUALITY

It has to be stated that, although Feminism has in fact succeeded in uncovering areas of indisputable discrimination against women, Feminism does not enjoy universal support among women. It often happens that Feminists have to contend with resistance from, for example, anti-abortion groups or groups that focus on "the femininity of women as traditionally defined" as well as on the fact that women "have the best of both worlds" (Davidson & Gordon 1979:195). According to groups that support traditional "femininity" a school curriculum should not only make provision for the academic, economic or political ideals of a woman. A school curriculum should also make provision for the social ideals of a woman. These include preparation for a life "revolving around the church, husband, children, and home"; in other words, preparation to become a "Total Woman" (Davidson & Gordon 1979:196).

Jean Anyon (1983:19) points out that the female in the school has to cope with subtle differences in the contradictory perceptions (or social messages) of acceptable female behaviour: on the *one* hand, femininity

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and, on the *other* hand, the development of self-esteem (defined in terms of traditional masculine behaviour) necessary in the competitive world of work. She goes on to say that "most women who accept femininity as their natural role" are trapped within the contradictions of these two perceptions evident in the school curriculum (Anyon 1983:34). Furthermore, that Feminist movements has neither the support of society at large (which values the role of the nuclear family in a stable society) nor of all women (especially those women who value their role in the traditional nuclear family). Questions are also raised "as to how and why men and women are different". Whether women are "different from men because of their genetic make-up or because of their upbringing"; in other words, the question of what is fundamental to the sense of one's own sexuality apart from physical differences (The Guinness Encyclopedia 1990:293).

4.3.4 FEMINISM AND ACCENTS IN THE STRUGGLE FOR KNOWLEDGE POWER

4.3.4.1 FEMINISM AND KNOWLEDGE

Feminism views knowledge in *two distinct ways*. Knowledge is seen as a *commodity*, in which case gender equality is interpreted as equal access to curricular knowledge regardless of being male or female.

Alternatively, knowledge is seen as *an agent of socialisation*, in which case it is possible – in theory at least – "to change ideological images and social attitudes" inherent in the school curriculum (Wernerrson 1991:171). The implication of which is that Feminism stresses the importance of dialogue (and not division or domination) in the production of knowledge.

Despite a widespread tendency to regard knowledge, and especially scientific knowledge, as "being unquestionable and unassailable 'truth'" Feminists argue that knowledge is "as socially constructed as is the use to which it is put" (Ayer 1958:107–108). Consequently, knowledge in the inherited curriculum is not enshrined or final; it is a reflection of what has been regarded as "important", the "truth" or "powerful knowledge" in previous times (Walker 1983:2). The dominant Western tradition of positivism (of the importance of science, objectivity, certainty and rationality associated with "maleness") (Askew & Ross 1989:108), and hence the legitimacy of knowledge associated with division and

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domination, is challenged by Feminists (Miller 1982:182). It is stressed that "interrelatedness" is an important attribute of all knowledge; that, in fact, the accent on fixed boundaries in the justification of knowledge (in the positivist tradition) has given rise to *the cultural barriers* and difference in status between objectivity (male) and subjectivity (female) reflected in knowledge in the traditional school curriculum.

Furthermore that, because (mostly male) scientists "have brought to science virile, domineering, and exploitive characteristics", this has "created an imbalance within science" itself which will not be "redressed until science is reclaimed as human" and not a masculine prerogative (Jansen 1990:27).

Feminists in the post-modern tradition point out that knowledge is not objective but "historically contingent"; that – because it is subjective and not universal – knowledge is relative and partial, has a "plurality of meanings" and hence, that "there is no single ultimate truth" (Engelstad 1991:504–505). They move away from "one fixed truth revealed by objectivity" to the possibility that even the many truths are constantly undergoing change depending on the values of whoever is in control of the knowledge-making process (Kramarae & Spender 1992:6); that democratic dialogue (and not gender) is important in determining the "importance" of knowledge.

4.3.4.2 SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

Feminism, as an organised social movement campaigning for the emancipation of women, has been active for over a hundred and fifty years (The Guinness Encyclopedia 1990:292). It gained momentum mainly because of the great impact of the Industrial Revolution on traditional values, on traditional social structures, and on the "importance" of traditional bodies of knowledge. The *aim* of Feminism is *to overcome traditional limitations* insofar as women are discriminated against because they are women (Davidson & Gordon 1979:5). Two more or less opposing views about what these "limitations" mean and how to overcome them, are evident in the aims of Feminism: on the *one* hand, the view that access to existing structures, like the school curriculum, can be used to achieve equal rights and, on the *other* hand, the view that "equal rights for all cannot be achieved without far-reaching changes" in social perceptions about gender-related issues (Davidson & Gordon 1979:8).

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One of the first publications to influence and inspire future generations of Feminist reformers was *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* by an Englishwoman, Mary Wollstonecraft, in 1792 (The Guinness Encyclopedia 1990:292). She had a vision of education that would develop the full potential of girls, notwithstanding the fact that they were female. At the first Women's Rights meeting, which took place at the Seneca Falls Convention in New York State in 1948, it was declared that "all men and women are created equal" (The Guinness Encyclopedia 1990:292). Objections were raised against various forms of "discrimination" such as the accent on domestic obligations of women; low wages and limited access to jobs, the latter often with long hours and poor pay only; social constraints barring women from certain privileges commonly enjoyed by males such as access to all types of educational and training institutions and, finally, the fact that women were legally prevented from voting. In England the initial concern was for more employment opportunities, improving the education of girls, and reforming the property law. In 1865 the first woman qualified as a doctor, in 1878 London University opened its doors to women and in 1882 women were granted the legal right to own property. The next concern was women's suffrage: intense peaceful and militant efforts were directed towards gaining the universal right to vote for women, and in 1893 New Zealand was the first country to grant the national vote to women. In this way a new political identity was created for women; women were emancipated from public non-representation and granted legal recognition (Humm 1992:14).

After these gains in women's rights had been secured, the struggle for *educational* and *economic* rights for women started gaining momentum. During the Second World War women were employed in many traditional male-dominated fields. After the war, however, women had to return to the home, and their traditional role in society was again strengthened. But during the 1960s and 1970s, strongly under the influence of the concern for human rights and radical student politics in North America and Western Europe, the movement re-emerged and, for a time, became known as the Women's Liberation Movement. A gradual change of perception is evident in the aims of women struggling for knowledge power. This perceptual change profoundly influenced their demands, the main focus of which was now on the "oppression" of women in society and in the school curriculum. The aim was to change the subordinate

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position of women and liberate them from the oppressive, objective and male-dominated knowledge in the school curriculum (Walters 1993/94:120); to unsettle the dominant "regime of truth" and instill alternative meanings; to construct a new subjective body of knowledge and establish a subjective identity that would encompass human wholeness and would not be based on division by gender differentiation or sexuality only (Rowbotham 1990:246); to give a voice to women as different from men; and in so doing, to remove the unnecessary limitations on the opportunities for girls and women which are the result of "silencing" the voices of women in the "knowledge-producing" power structures in society (Bozalek & Sunde 1993/94:73). The objective was an emancipatory (or transformed) school curriculum that would be instrumental in gaining access to the knowledge-producing processes and, by extension, the power structures in society as part of a process of economic, social and political liberation for women; a process to ensure a democratic balance of power in society (Walters 1993/94:116).

In general, the aims of Feminism include "justice, equality with men, and increasing the power and independence of women (Enslin 1993/94:21). From this perspective, "the fate of women is linked to changes in societal definitions of who has authority. Because persons or groups with political or social power can determine relations between entire classes, for example ... between all men and all women" (Davidson & Gordon 1979:190), the aim was to scrutinise the school curriculum in order to reveal the mechanisms of power and social inequality – like patriarchy or sexism – and to grasp the discrimination evident in the existing power relations between men and women and between high and lower social classes (Davidson & Gordon 1979:189). In a South African article (Wolpe 1993/94:8) it is explicitly stated that the school curriculum should be instrumental in supplying *all* women with the relevant knowledge to demystify the dominant position of males. According to Lynne Chrisholm (1990:252) Feminism and anti-sexism "rejects the notion of ideological neutrality" of knowledge, and "aims specifically and explicitly at social and cultural transformation rather than reproduction" in the school curriculum. Underlying this view is the assumption that meanings of the dominant social order can and have to be reinterpreted in terms of a Feminist point of view, so that women will not be dehumanised in any way. It is in this sense that Black Feminist

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thought, for example, points out that "the voice that I now seek is both individual and collective, personal and political, one reflecting the intersection of my unique biography with the large meaning of my historical times" (Collins 1991:xii).

However, within the anti-sexist circles it is strongly felt that the school is a microcosm of society; that unless there is a change in the social structure itself – in the social value system – the much criticised power structure between male and female will not change (Askew & Ross 1989:xi). For example, Askew and Ross (1989:14) point out that, although it is generally assumed that "women are gaining equality with men or that 'the rules of the power game have changed'", women do not believe this to be the case. What may be true, is that "some women may have gained more equality with *some* men, but for the majority of women the rules have not changed and the power still resides very firmly in the hands of white, upper-middle-class males" (Askew & Ross 1989:14).

Notwithstanding their long struggle and many tangible achievements, Feminists generally agree that – because only a minority of women are found in the ranks of political, educational and economic decision-making positions in most countries (Scandinavia is the exception) – society is still a male-dominated reality in which the school curriculum is a "necessary tool in maintaining male dominance" (Thomas 1990:13).

4.3.4.3 THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM: CRITICISM AND DEMANDS

4.3.4.3.1 REPRODUCING THE WESTERN CULTURAL IDEAL

Feminists argue that, although as human beings we all share the same world, the school curriculum reflects a perception that, for a long time, knowledge has been the prerogative of men; that Western civilisation is mostly the result of male endeavour (O'Brien 1989:7). Consequently the school curriculum, incorporating both accumulative (the great cultural achievements of past ages) and objective (scientific and rational) knowledge, effectively eliminates the contribution of women to the cultural heritage (O'Brien 1989:7). In addition, the school curriculum – mainly the product of male-produced and therefore biased in the sense that it is depicted "solely in terms of the observable conformities to dominant ideologies and interpretations" – is presented as though it is value-free (Walker 1983:16). Spender (Thomas 1990:13), for example, argues that

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"men have provided us with a false picture of the world ... not just because their view is so limited, but because they have insisted that their *limited* view is the *total* view". In this way the curriculum reproduces a perception that knowledge "men constructed about women" is "frequently rated as 'objective', while knowledge women began to construct about women" is frequently "rated as 'subjective'"; in other words, women are exploited insofar as the legitimacy of knowledge (in the Western cultural ideal) is associated with objectivity, the implication of which is that the male is the "dominant" gender (Miller 1982:182).

This is seen as discrimination, the experience of which perpetuates the control of women by men, and girls by boys. The argument is that women are oppressed – it is not simply a matter of prejudice – because the balance of power (dependent upon the "importance" of objective knowledge associated with maleness), as it is reflected in Western-oriented school curricula, is used as a means of effectively excluding girls and women from the power structures in Western-oriented societies (Thomas 1990:13). This poses a very special problem for black women who argue that they are written out of Western-oriented school curricula, both on account of their "femaleness" as well as of their "race", mainly because of discriminatory "divisions" inherent in the Western cultural ideal and, therefore, reflected in school curricula in Western-oriented societies (Collins 1991:20).

Feminism challenges the "truth" of curricular knowledge and demand that knowledge presented in textbooks should be transformed to reflect the "real world" in which women sometimes play an important role (Thomas 1990:18); that curricular knowledge should reflect a more democratic balance of power between the genders; that textbooks have to include stories in which women and girls (both black and white) are central characters – "important" or "famous" (Wilson 1991a:224).

4.3.4.3.2 THE IDEOLOGY OF PATRIARCHY AND GENDER STEREOTYPING

Feminists argue that, while the perception is cultivated that education empowers both boys and girls in terms of an independent future, the structure of schools, as well as the knowledge transmitted in school curricula, is hierarchical and the epitome of white "male supremacy and ruling class power" values, and hence discriminatory in terms of basic

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human rights (O'Brien 1989:259). It is argued that it is not lack of opportunity for women that causes gender inequality in society; rather it is because the child is socialised into a system of patriarchal power relations both reflected and reinforced by the school curriculum. This is the case irrespective of social or political reality (Wilson 1991a:221).

Askew and Ross (1989:108) suggest that this is an important insight as "the roles and 'characteristics' claimed by the dominant group will determine the roles and 'characteristics' assigned to subordinate groups". Qualities like sincerity, gentleness, refinement and self-control – qualities not usually associated with high levels of achievement in the public sphere – are stressed in the development of girls. Girls are socialised to "be the guardians of the moral order, to be unselfish, non-assertive and appreciative of culture rather than the purely material products of the age" (Lynch 1991:134). While all these characteristics, as well as caring for others, are worthwhile and valuable social assets, they "become social millstones for women when men are not socialised into them as well" (Lynch 1991:134). It is, therefore, argued that the apparent paradox between the high level of female academic performance and the low level of female participation in technology and prestigious school subjects are perhaps best explained by gender-stereotyping in the hidden curriculum of the school (Lynch 1991:133).

Extensive research on textbooks has shown that women are mostly portrayed in terms of being part of a traditional nuclear family (dominant male, dependent female housekeeper and dependent children) seen as an essential stabilising force in society; as the subordinate character and as mother or housewife doing low-status tasks. Men, on the other hand, are mostly "objective", "wealthy", "successful", "courageous" or "wise" (Alberdi & Alberdi 1991:164). The characteristics associated with men in textbooks – characteristics like rational, assertive, independent, aggressive and competitive – are all ones that are associated with social power and with leadership and social success (Enslin 1993/94:16).

However, according to Feminism, the influence of the hidden curriculum is such that it is not uncommon that girls may even experience different treatment of the genders as "normal" or "natural"; that they may not even be aware that "differences" can be the result of social

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reproduction (Plateau 1991:35). For example, in a recent investigation involving 155 first-year students on an educational course, it was "found that 25% of them expected boys, but not girls, to be reckless, untidy, cheeky, brave, noisy and naughty; and expected girls, but not boys, to be tidy, clean, quiet, sensible, obedient, passive and well behaved" (Sikes 1993:17-18).

Feminism argues that the transmission of knowledge that reproduces patriarchy and gender stereotyping – that the female is inferior to the masculine simply by virtue of being feminine – is gross discrimination against women. Moreover, researchers have come to the conclusion that, although there is a growing tendency towards equal treatment of the genders in schools, this is based upon the acceptance of the male model as the norm; thus making the male model into the universal role model for which to strive (Alberdi & Alberdi 1991:167). The demand is for the transformation of curricular knowledge in such a way that it will be instrumental in transforming the "status" of women; that curricular knowledge, therefore, will be instrumental in empowering women by virtue of breaking down the discriminatory "divisions" between genders and, hence, in changing the "oppressive" balance of power in Western-oriented societies.

4.3.4.3.3 CURRICULAR DIFFERENTIATION

Research has revealed that, because the perception that some kinds of knowledge are deemed more "important" is "communicated very effectively in schools" (Thomas 1990:19), this may lead to a lack of self-confidence which, in turn, may influence the choice of school subjects (Randall 1987:170). Feminists deplore this type of "oppression" and argue that not only knowledge, but also the *boundaries* between subjects is *socially constructed*. According to Thomas (1990:19), subjects with high status, like science, physics, maths and technology, are also the ones associated with the male attribute of objectivity and the high status world of work usually considered to be the prerogative of men. On the other hand, subjects with lower status, like the arts, are associated with the female attribute of subjectivity. Other subjects with lower status, like home economics and typing are associated with the home, or that part of the world of work that is usually regarded as the domain of women. Related to this discriminatory differentiation is

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the fact that curricular options are often constructed in such a way that a "masculine"-oriented subject stands against a "feminine"-oriented subject (which is instrumental in excluding girls from access to high status knowledge) (Askew & Ross 1989:108). This is seen as one of the reasons why many girls do not seem to choose science and technology, where there is less potential for gender bias. Yet, although "discrimination" against women is more pronounced in the social sciences, girls are well represented in the social sciences. Research has found that science and technology are, to a large extent, still very much a male stronghold mainly because science cannot be removed from the social context of identification with male dominance (Thomas 1990:18,35).

Feminists argue that differentiation of school knowledge, in terms of gender division (in which femininity is usually devalued and knowledge associated with the traditional feminine role usually does not have the same status, nor the same "relevance", as knowledge associated with men) goes much deeper than the portrayal of women as subordinate in textbooks; that discrimination is evident in the socially constructed boundaries between subjects (Thomas 1990:18-20). Research, as Plateau (1991:30) underlines, has unmasked the "Myth of Free Choice" and disclosed "the hidden mechanisms of ... differentiation and hierarchy" of the rigid gender-related system of social relations which is evident in the school curriculum. The demand is that, in order to prevent the prejudice inherent in these "rigid gender-related" social relations, curricular knowledge will have to be transformed so that not only boys, but also girls will be empowered by the school curriculum; that an emancipatory school curriculum will have to endow masculine (or objective) and feminine (or subjective) attributes with equal "worth". In this way it will become possible to eradicate the difference in status between school subjects and, at the same time, girls will acquire human dignity (in terms of basic human rights) and a "voice" in the knowledge-producing structures in society (Plateau 1991:38).

4.3.4.3.4 EQUAL ACCESS TO KNOWLEDGE AND ITS RELATION TO THE ECONOMY

Feminism points out that, especially in the primary school, there is a *rigid division* between rules for work, such as maths or writing - which

little boys do – and rules for *play*, such as art, reading, or paging through books – which is associated with little girls (Askew & Ross 1989:53). Moreover, girls are socialised to think of work in terms of earning a salary as only one of their many responsibilities in life (Lynch 1991:134). However, it is not only the school curriculum as such, but *patterns of employment* that have had the greatest impact on subjects chosen by both boys and girls in schools (Wernerrson 1991:183). Research demonstrates the perennial problem that the economy does not employ girls in certain posts (Wilson 1991a:222).

Nevertheless, because power and social status are mostly determined by "material" values, Maggie Wilson (1991c:1) explicitly states that "without equal access to educational" resources "girls and women have over the years been deprived of their personal development", of their rightful place in the economy and, hence, of "their capacity to influence the local and national political decisions which effect their daily lives". This is seen as discrimination in terms of the right to education, that has been a part of human rights documents in most countries since the Second World War. In other words, Feminists, demand equality in and through the school curriculum; "relevant" knowledge to the effect that economic independence will be instrumental in gaining access to power structures in society and, as a consequence, power to secure control of the construction of an "identity" which will have social "status" (Lynch 1991:134; Wilson 1991c:1-2).

Hence Feminists are particularly critical of the fact that, when there is a manpower shortage, girls are urged to study science or technical subjects: this is not always seen as improving gender equality, rather as reinforcing the traditional subordinate role of females in that they are regarded as a sort of "reserve army of labour" (Wernerrson 1991:184).

4.3.4.3.5 SOCIAL LEGITIMATION

The criticism is that, in most Western countries – in a more liberal country like America or Britain as well as a more conservative country like Spain with its strong traditional and hierarchical power structures – gender differentiation persists in schools and the curriculum, despite

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legislation to the contrary, "because it is rarely challenged" (Alberdi & Alberdi 1991:167).

Nonetheles, in Sweden, as Wernerrson (1991:184) suggests, "social change in other areas, such as the increase in participation of women in the labour market, and the more modest increase in the participation of women in the legislative bodies at different levels would not have been possible without changes" in the school curriculum. Yet even in Sweden, the traditional role of women – as subordinate – is still being reinforced. This illustrates that the school curriculum can be a tool in the transformation of the social and economic power structure only insofar as the community allows it to be one (Wernerrson 1991:184).

Notwithstanding the fact that a school curriculum can be an instrument of "liberation" – insofar as the possession of certain kinds of knowledge is inextricably linked to social status and "freedom" from various forms of "domination" (Kontogiannopoulou-Polydoris 1991:98) – there is a dawning recognition among Feminists that demands or changes to the school curriculum are insufficient if generation after generation of educated girls come up against barriers in the social system (Wilson 1991:223). As Charles (1991:77) argues: "If [in France] so few girls are to be found in industrial training courses today, it is because their whole upbringing since their early childhood has led them to disengage from things mechanical or technological". This leads to a kind of *voluntary exclusion* in accordance with a perception of what is important in the self-fulfilment of girls. Therefore it is clear that *social conscience* plays an important role in the social legitimization of an allegedly *oppressive* school curriculum; that a change of perception is imperative in any attempt to eliminate discrimination.

It is furthermore important to note the evidence that, despite attempts to remove gender discrimination from school curricula, the family "still exercises a very strong influence on education and career aspirations" as well as on accents in gender differentiation (Alberdi & Alberdi 1991:167). Research shows that, not only in conservative countries but also in liberal countries, *the influence of the family* on the *truth* of knowledge concerning moral issues (like preparing a women to become a good mother or wife) is often much stronger than that of either the school curriculum or the teacher (Alberdi & Alberdi 1991:167).

4.3.4.3.6 THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER

A large body of Feminist research has come to the conclusion that there is a tendency towards "different" treatment of boys and girls in the school, a tendency towards biased or preferential treatment of boys in the classroom - even though more attention may be given to boys mainly because they are more disruptive (Thomas 1990:16). In a recent study student teachers have found that differential treatment, or gender-related expectations, are still very much in evidence in schools. It was not unusual to hear teachers say: "Two strong boys carry this table"; "nice girls don't shout" or "could you come and put a plug on my new printer Mr Brown?" (Sikes 1993:10). Boys are asked to carry tables while girls are asked to tidy up (Robinson 1989:128).

The role of the teacher in the socialisation of boys and girls into "traditional" gender roles is being criticised extensively. On the *one* hand, teachers are seen as agents of control, especially when male teachers place themselves in a dominant and authoritarian position (Askew & Ross 1989:53). On the *other* hand, research has shown that many teachers (male and female) who think they are treating all their pupils "as individuals regardless of sex" are in fact condoning gender-stereotyping simply by accepting it in the classroom (Randall 1987:171). It is therefore pointed out that teachers are not the "possessors" of "truth" and that, if knowledge construction takes place through dialogue, knowledge will become relevant to the needs of girls. Teachers will then realise that gender-stereotyping "could be reinforced in his or her classroom" and will be "in a position to intervene by changing his or her responses so that potentially harmful stereotypes and patterns of interaction are not reinforced" (Randall 1987:170). Such a teacher will be equipped to consciously build up the self-confidence of girls in the classroom; to review the strategies in the classroom so that, for example, girls are not expected to do certain kinds of work and boys other kinds of work, or that boys and girls are not given different thematic assignments. A transformed body of knowledge will contribute towards the girls' emancipation from domination by a male-oriented school curriculum.

Feminists point out that teachers, in anticipating the problems or "discrimination" that children might encounter in the world of "work",

or in society, can have a great influence on the subject choices of a girl; in this way a teacher can either prevent a girl from being "empowered" by high status knowledge or, by taking a radical stance, "use" the school curriculum to "empower" the girl to join the struggle for women's rights (Alberdi & Alberdi 1991:167).

4.3.4.3.7 THE ROLE OF THE STATE

The state is criticised for sanctioning a school curriculum in which discrimination against women evident in the *status quo* is being reproduced. However research shows that a change of attitude does not take place overnight (Alberdi & Alberdi 1991:168). The demand from Feminists, though, is that state legislation will not only accommodate changing attitudes towards the genders, but will actively promote the basic human dignity of women of all races. The demand is that appropriate legislation or social measures will be taken to ensure, *firstly*, that the school curriculum will be "relevant" to the needs of both the community and individual children and, *secondly*, that equal access to cultural resources will be possible for both genders (as well as for women from different cultural groups).

Feminists argue that it was mainly in response to government intervention, that measures to promote educational opportunities of girls over the last twenty years have been introduced in certain countries (Wilson 1991c:4). Sweden, the country generally regarded as having made the greatest strides in gender equality in the school curriculum, is a good example of where the state, compared to many other European countries, has "played a strong role in the promotion of equal opportunities in the labour market since the 1970s ... particularly after the passage of the Equal Opportunities Act of 1980" (Wernerrson 1991:183). It is suggested, that it was only after the Swedish government had officially stressed the "importance of changing the content of education to actively promote new ideas of gender roles and relations" in the redistribution of resources, that a substantial increase in the representation of women in the decision-making and advisory bodies in Sweden (albeit in the field of health, social welfare and cultural affairs) had been noticed; that active government participation had been instrumental in establishing a more democratic balance of power between the genders (Wernerrson 1991:171).

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The important role of the state, in the elimination of gender discrimination, is recognised by all Feminists who criticise governments for not keeping up with the times; for not being "involved" in anti-discriminatory action (Alberdi & Alberdi 1991:168). Yet, despite state legislation in socially more conservative countries like Greece, which resulted in a "massive increase in feminine enrolment" in schools, and may have contributed greatly towards achieving equality of educational opportunity between the genders, "it has not really affected the status of women in society at large" (Kontogiannopoulou-Polydoris 1991:92).

4.3.5 SUMMARY

The main concern of Feminism is with emancipation from male domination and with equality of the genders in terms of human dignity. However, two separate pursuits in the struggle for "equality" in terms of the school curriculum are evident: *equality in education* and *equality through education*. The earlier political consensus on achieving equality of opportunity has gradually been giving way to a new concern: the moral concern with social order and social values inherent in knowledge.

The focus is now on *meanings* and on demands to prevent the school curriculum from reproducing the legitimacy of the "present inegalitarian socioeconomic system" which discriminates against women as a group (David 1983:147). Moreover, to ensure that women's "differences" will not constrain them in any way from gaining access to the power structures in society, demands on the school curriculum are concerned, not only with breaking down the "division" between the genders in terms of equality as a basic human right, but with the power to control the knowledge-producing processes (and "truth"); with acquiring a "voice" equal (though different) to that of men; in fact, with humanising women.

What is clear, however, is that only a major *change in the social consciousness* (regarding both the legitimisation of "truth" and the importance of the nuclear family as the cornerstone of a stable society) will authorise the justification of a transformed (or an "emancipatory") school curriculum in terms of the Feminist ideal of a democratic balance of power in society.

4.4 THE GAY MOVEMENT AND THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM

4.4.1 INTRODUCTION

Information about the Gay movement and its demands on the school curriculum is not readily available. One reason may be that the Gay movement is of fairly recent origin, another that most Western-oriented societies, for a long time, have not considered homosexuality a legitimate topic for discussion. In contemporary society *negative attitudes* and *stereotypes* about homosexuals are not uncommon while positive images of "gay" men "have been extremely limited" in the media and in social institutions like the school (Newman 1989:205). Consequently, as research has revealed, the atmosphere in schools is such that "gay" students normally do not disclose their sexual orientation (Houser 1990a:344). This, according to the Gay movement, is what prevents an opening up of the possibility of diversities in the population and is, therefore, instrumental in excluding Gays from the power structures in society. What seems necessary - and is the aim of this section on the Gay movement - is a better understanding of the demands and the issues concerning homosexuality and its relationship to the school curriculum.

4.4.2 WHAT IS GAY?

At present the word *gay* is often taken as a synonym for *homosexual*. Activists, however, are emphatic that it is not the same. *Gay*, for them, designates political consciousness and militant support of the homosexual liberation movement. In this sense to be gay is to have taken a deliberate choice (Dynes 1990a:455). This touches, on the *one* hand, on the concept *homosexuality* and, on the *other*, on political design in that it implies a *struggle for power* (Johannson 1990a:556).

What then is homosexuality? "Homos" is derived from a Greek word meaning "same" (Went 1985:80). In short, homosexuality is the sexual attraction to, or sexual relations with, a person of the same sex (The Concise Oxford Dictionary 1983:477). This is in contrast to heterosexuality - sexual relations with the opposite sex - which is regarded as the norm in view of the survival of mankind (Johannson 1990a:559). The *anatomic identity* (cf Chapter 4.3.2.1), or gender

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identity, of the homosexual person is usually normal insofar as men think of themselves as men and do not distrust members of the opposite sex (Fairchild & Hayward 1979:72-73).

In sociological terms, homosexuality is seen as "a condition which in itself has only minor effects upon the development of the personality" (Schofield 1965:203). A stress situation is created, not by the attitude of the homosexual, but by the attitudes "of other people towards this condition" (Schofield 1965:203). In this sense "homosexuals ... [are] similar to other people in every respect but one": they are disempowered by the attitude towards them (Schofield 1965:205). Sociological research has brought to light that homosexual conduct, although it is variant, "need not be deviant" behaviour (Schofield 1965:211). It is deviant behaviour only insofar as it is labelled as such; "the deviance is not necessarily a quality of the homosexual act" (Schofield 1965:211). In guidelines for modern sex education it is mentioned that "homosexuality is not caused by any physical, hormonal, or genetic condition, and seems to be a normal variation of human sexuality" and that "talking about it ... will not cause 'conversions'" (Went 1985:81).

The origins of the modern concept of homosexuality is based, *firstly*, on Judaic law (Leviticus 20:13) in which the sexual union of two males is treated as a single offence; *secondly*, on the more abstract thinking of the Greeks towards a logical parallel in terms of "the equation of male-male and female-female"; and, *thirdly*, on an attempt in nineteenth-century Germany to determine the nature and occurrence of sexual attraction between members of the same sex. What emerged during this investigation was the recognition that same-sex-oriented relationships existed, although it had been "denied by Christian theology and Christian society for centuries" (Johannson 1990a:557-558). The conclusion of this group of investigators – albeit forensic psychiatrists – was that individuals "who were incapable of feeling any attraction to the opposite sex" could not be held legally responsible for their sexual conduct.

The German word *Homosexualität* was used for the first time, in a polemic in the latter part of the nineteenth century, in an attempt to challenge both the customary and deeply rooted tradition of

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stigmatisation and the penal laws against homosexual activity in the Christian world (Johannson 1990a:557).

According to the Gay movement, homosexuality is more than simply a matter of "a social rite"; homosexuality not only has implications for "shifts in the balance of power", it also generates "religious, social and economic consequences" (Mac an Ghaill 1991:291). The day you "say you're gay ... you find out it's the most important thing in the world ... your parents will reject you, your friends will reject you, you won't find a job ... [and] teachers feel more threatened by gays than by any other group" (Mac an Ghaill 1991:291,292). Underlying the complex nature of the concept of homosexuality is the fact that "key ideas are not forged through a simple conjunction taking place at a single moment in history" (Johannson 1990a:560). To complicate matters a concept like homosexuality is susceptible to subtle shifts in meaning; shifts in meaning that bring about corresponding shifts in the degree of aversion towards homosexuality (Mac an Ghaill 1991:299).

Against this background it is important to know that the term, "sexual orientation" (*cf* Chapter 4.3.2.1), came into use in 1970s. The term "sexual orientation is multi-dimensional" (Newman 1989:205); it describes a "stable pattern established by an individual of erotic and affectional ... response to others with respect to gender". The two common "stable patterns", or orientations, are homosexual and heterosexual (Dynes 1990c:931). The advantage of the term sexual orientation is that it is, to a certain extent, value neutral. It "conveys something of the complex interactions between individual personality" and the response to "the social environment ... in keeping with one's own individual character and experience" (Dynes 1990c:931).

4.4.3 SOCIETY, EDUCATION AND HOMOSEXUALITY

Two related factors have had an influence on the status of homosexuality in the Western world. *Firstly*, that to be heterosexual is "normal" insofar as it is associated with survival and the nuclear family as a social institution. *Secondly*, that since the beginning of recorded history, certain names "were not to be uttered because of the dangers that surrounded them" (Dynes 1990b:675). The "taboo" regarding

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homosexuality is related to the Judeo-Christian proscription of sodomy. This led to "active deletion"; it is described as "the crime against nature", "the nameless sin" or "gross indecency" (Dynes 1990b:675).

In Western societies the nuclear family – father, mother and children – is traditionally seen as the foundation of a stable social reality. Associated with the "importance" of a healthy nuclear family, are strong convictions about the social and moral norms of right and wrong in terms of sexual behaviour, for example, that it is "right" for a man to be heterosexual (Schofield 1965:192). These convictions are especially strong in Anglo-American societies. There are communities in the non-English speaking world, for example France and Italy (Dall'Orto 1990:622), where homosexuality, although not condoned, does not evoke the harsh judgement evident in the following:

"A detestable and abominable sin, amongst Christians not to be named, committed by carnal knowledge against the ordinance of the Creator, and order of nature, by mankind with mankind ..." (Schofield 1965:192).

The above is part of a definition of sodomy by Chief Justice Coke in his *Institutes of the Laws of England* in 1629. This definition, besides forming the basis of laws on homosexuality in Anglo-American societies for over 300 years, is also characteristic of the "silence" that cultivated more or less total ignorance of any alternative types of sexual orientation until very recently (Caplan 1981:149).

It was in Britain in 1953 – in reaction to the Wolfendon Committee Report after an investigation into circumstances involved in a series of trials concerning homosexuality – that, for the first time in the English-speaking world, homosexuality became an issue of "public" debate. The Wolfendon Report was of the opinion that a sexual act was part of private life and therefore not subject to the law. This was, at one and the same time, a rejection of the theological argument of "a crime against nature" and "contrary to the will of God", as well as a rejection of the notion that homosexuality is a disease (Donaldson 1990:840).

This Report and ensuing debate, the growing interest in human rights following the Universal Declaration Of Human Rights in 1948, and a

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general concern for the oppressed since the 1960s, evoked a redirection in research on homosexuality from "an illness approach to an identity and relationship approach" (Newman 1989:205). Because of these factors the view came to be established that "this sizeable minority of the population show a natural variation of human sexuality, and should be able to take their place in society with dignity, a good self image and a positive outlook for the future" (Went 1985:187). This "new" approach cultivated a degree of tolerance in limited circles and the small Harvey Milk School – a high school for gay students in New York City – was established in 1985. In this school grammar, algebra and survival is taught. The aim is to "reintegrate kids into the traditional school or, failing that, to provide them with a safe haven, free from censure, in which to come to terms with themselves and pursue their diploma" (Green 1991:36). The students, not confused about their identity, agree that they would have been dropouts, or suicides, had it not been for Harvey Milk. Because something like this would have been inconceivable not many years ago the Gay movement regards this as a major breakthrough (Green 1991:33). And yet among gays there is a feeling that "there shouldn't have to be one" (Green 1991:68).

Another breakthrough was in 1979 when (in America) the Working Party Report from the Board of Social Responsibility – based on the discussion findings from a group of Methodist and Anglican churches – advised the acceptance of homosexuality and stated that those so oriented "have no choice but to be homosexual" (Went 1985:186). Studies in psychology, by among others Raffalovitch and Freud, found that the homosexual choice was not necessarily an unconventional gender identity. However alternative sexual orientation remains, to a large extent, a sensitive matter. And the answer to the question whether "knowledge" about gays should be included in the school curriculum remains a difficult one. In 1992 one of the many books on the list in the first-grade teacher's guide for New York City public schools was *Daddy's Roommate*: a book about a happy youngster with two male parents who say "being gay is just one more kind of love" (Leo 1992:16). What followed can be described as an emotional eruption, but in the reaction to the inclusion of such knowledge in the school curriculum more than one point of view came to the fore. On the *one* hand, school authorities were accused of condoning homosexuality and "trying to undermine family life and of

flying in the face of Christian teaching". On the *other* hand, it was argued that "such accusations .. [are] unreasonable and short-sighted. The nuclear family and the Christian church remain on offer to those that choose them" (Osborne 1986:15). Evident in this controversy, sparked off by efforts to meet the demand of "equal" rights for gays in curricular knowledge, are, in the *first* place, two different and opposing views; and, in the *second* place, disagreements that can be seen as "but one skirmish in the cultural war" which will affect society - and the school curriculum - as long as it is being waged (Leo 1992:16).

Nonetheless, according to Hurwitz (1993:85), there is also a feeling that the "sexual disorientation" of gays "is not an entitlement to special protection, since they already enjoy the constitutional safeguards afforded the general population". The feeling is, too, that in "the drive by militant homosexual groups to promote homosexuality as a normal form of sexual expression" they "are moving through the nation's schools" (Hurwitz 1993:85).

Without a doubt the question of homosexuality is a complex issue in which the central contradiction - especially in terms of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights - seems to be: "Schools have a duty to promote decent behaviour towards gays, but on what basis can a public school system insist that homosexuality must be approved?" (Leo 1992:16).

This is especially important as research, indicating that a significant proportion of school children become gay adults, cannot be ignored (Went 1985:187). Neither can lack of factual information in the school curriculum on fostering "mutual understanding" in terms of homosexuality, be ignored (Went 1985:187). In this respect the words of John Anderson (1994:35) are important: "The conspiracy of silence is not based on malice ... Ignorance is part of the problem too". Hostility towards homosexuality cannot be explained in logical terms. However, in dealing with a traditional "prejudice" or taboo, facts alone are notoriously ineffectual in any attempt to change human attitude (Schofield 1965:205).

4.4.4 THE GAY MOVEMENT AND HOMOSEXUALITY

The Gay movement has its roots in the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century which initiated the struggle against every form of "arbitrary oppression" (Donaldson 1990:834). The first homosexual organisation, the *Wissenschaftlich-humanitäre Komitee* (Scientific Humanitarian Committee), was established on 14 May 1897 in Germany. Its first action was to draft a petition for repealing the penal laws against homosexuals. This organisation, because it neither developed into a mass or "activist" organisation nor sought status for itself, was not well-known outside Germany (Donaldson 1990:835).

In the rest of the Western world, the beginning of the twentieth century saw various "groups of friends" concerning themselves with changing public laws, and public opinion in connection with the legitimacy and the morality of homosexuality. Gradually these efforts were consolidated into a larger "sexual reform movement" which rejected "the traditional ascetic morality of the Christian Church and its more modern variants to a greater or lesser degree" (Donaldson 1990:835). Throughout the industrial world "the old order in the realm of sexuality – a kind of Old Regime of social control – was under attack on many fronts" (Donaldson 1990:836). Followers of the various movements (like birth control and women's suffrage movements) were allies in their stance against traditional authority and national laws. The homosexual movement was, therefore, part of "a much larger wave of social agitation against nineteenth century sexual morality" and its effect on the traditional balance of power in society (Donaldson 1990:836).

In America, for example, the campaign of an American, Franklin E. Kameny (a Harvard trained astronomer who had lost his job because he was gay), played a prominent part in the ideological shift that took place in the attitude towards homosexuality within the Gay movement itself. The result of his campaign to transform the self-image of the homosexual from negative to positive – by using the slogan "Gay is good" – was that the "fearful members" of the early sixties, who used pseudonyms and avoided public involvement, became "the highly visible and equally vocal activists of the latter part of the decade" (Donaldson 1990:841). When the first public demonstration took place at the United

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Nations in New York in 1965, gay militancy was exposed to a nationwide television audience for the first time (Donaldson 1990:842). As a result, and under pressure of the federal government in 1967, the American Civil Liberties Union was forced to recognise the struggle for Gay rights as legitimate in terms of the inherent promise of American democracy (Johannson 1990b:698).

The Stonewall Riot in June 1969 – starting with violent resistance to a police raid on the Stonewall Inn – was the beginning of an even more militant phase in the history of the homosexual movement in the United States (Greenberg 1988:458). The subsequent Gay Liberation Front was "conceived as uniting homosexuals", without guidance or even participation from sympathetic heterosexuals, "around their own identity and grievances against an oppressive American society". Consequently, members were given "a sense of identity as a group inevitably oppressed by the established social structure" of which the school curriculum is one (Donaldson 1990:844). But, despite some "advances", the activities of Gay movements slowed down. Furthermore, the new conservative trend in most industrial countries during the 1980s, as well as the emergence of AIDS, added a new dimension to the stigmatisation associated with homosexuality (Greenberg 1988:476,478-480).

In the 1990s, notwithstanding the fact that homosexuals are "coming out", and that general and specialised information about homosexuality is available to the general public (Anderson 1994:37), the movement has yet to achieve the same degree of political rights and social acceptance that the "democratic countries have gradually accorded to other minority groups in their midst" (Donaldson 1990:848).

4.4.5 THE GAY MOVEMENT AND ACCENTS IN THE STRUGGLE FOR KNOWLEDGE POWER

4.4.5.1 THE GAY MOVEMENT AND KNOWLEDGE

The Gay movement does not subscribe to "positivist epistemology". It is argued that theoretical and scientific knowledge, even though it may be objective, is not regarded as more adequate to explain sexual relations (Mac an Ghail 1991:296); neither does objective or scientific knowledge

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present the whole picture (Wilson 1991a:221). According to Gays subjective knowledge, as well as the logic of common-sense and feelings about gender and sexual differences, are equally important (Mac an Ghaill 1991:296).

Supporting the idea that knowledge is *socially constructed* and therefore subject to change, since meanings can change in accordance with changes that occur in the social consciousness, the Gay movement believes, not in a one and only truth, but a truth as determined by the social reality in which knowledge is constructed. Hence it is argued that, for example, "the material and social construction of the 'modern homosexual' in the 1990s is pregnant with symbolic meanings within the collective heterosexual imagination", and thus "linked to the wider socioeconomic, historical, gender and moral order" (Mac an Ghaill 1991:300). By the same token it is argued that, by cultivating a positive frame of reference, it is possible to create a new *positive* consciousness and change the *subjective* content of the body of knowledge associated with gayness from *negative* to *positive*. Knowledge has to be transformed in accordance with the Gay ideal: such an emancipatory body of knowledge, when integrated into the school curriculum, will serve to liberate all gay students from the social restrictions which exclude them from the power structures in society.

4.4.5.2 SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

It was only after the second World War that the Gay movement gained a measure of ideological and social support in the Anglo-American world. This was mainly due to the alliance of the liberal tradition with the outcome of the Wolfendon Report in 1953 (cf Chapter 4.4.3), and Alfred Kinsey's *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (1948) and *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (1953) – based on an extended series of interviews in America – which astounded the world when it revealed the recurrent homosexuality in the American population (Went 1985:186; Greenberg 1988:454). This led to an evolution in the aims of the homosexual movement between 1961 and 1969 (Donaldson 1990:840). From "helping the individual homosexual to adjust to society" it changed to urging "a program of militant action designed to transform society on behalf of a homosexual community which was perfectly capable of speaking for

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itself". It was insisted that "not the psychiatrists, not the theologians, not the heterosexual 'authorities', but homosexuals themselves were the experts on homosexuality". It was further insisted that access to the power structures in society "would come, not by accommodation to the powers-that-be, but by publicly applied pressure, legal action, demonstration, and aggressive publicity" (Donaldson 1990:841).

The result was the formation of hundreds of gay associations and clubs, a new mass "visibility" and radical measures like "sit-ins, blockades, ... and disruptive tactics of all kinds". These were highly publicised and "astonished the American public, long used to an image of homosexuals as passive and weak". The demands from Gays were now for the protection of "human rights"; for "positive legislation protecting the rights of homosexual men and women in all spheres of life" including educational institutions (Donaldson 1990:844; Greenberg 1988:458).

The aim of the Gay movement is to remove all "societal stigmatization, discrimination and disenfranchisement" that homosexuals experience; in other words, to end legal and social intolerance in order to give the homosexual, not only a sexual, but a political identity as a member of an oppressed minority with a grievance – in terms of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – against society at large (Newman 1989:202). This is especially clear in a declaration by the British Gay Liberation Front (GLF) in December 1970, which stated that the first priority was "to defend the immediate interests of gay people against discrimination and social oppression". It was added that legal reform and education against prejudice was possible and necessary in the attempt to challenge the traditional balance of power in society, but could not "be a permanent solution. While existing social structures remain social prejudice and overt repression can always re-emerge ... GLF therefore sees itself as part of a wider movement aiming to abolish all forms of social oppression" (quoted in Houser 1990b:927).

In the United States the homosexual movement was, from the outset, interested in promoting gay studies in order to prove that homosexuals were "like other people" (quoted in Dynes & Johansson 1990:459) and not, as some psychiatrists argued, in any way neurotic. The result was that early groups were engaged in investigations which led to findings

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that "homosexuals could not be distinguished from heterosexuals on the basis of the Rorshach or other standard tests" (Dynes & Johansson 1990:459).

The accent on "equality", in most of the demands made by the Gay movement, is based on the fact that they have perceived "certain imbalances" in the knowledge content of the school curriculum, for example, that gays are not granted any positive attributes - socially or morally (Osborne 1986:15). Underlying the demands of the Gay movement for equal opportunity ordinances and protected status in the school curriculum (Newman 1989:208) - as in the case of Feminist demands - is, in fact, that "the right to receive an equal education has been a fundamental part of many human rights document since the Second World War" (Wilson 1991c:2). Yet this "right", though "underpinned by the principle of non-discrimination", was formerly expressed in terms of "access to, rather than the content of, education" (Wilson 1991c:2). With the focus on the content of the curriculum came an interest in the meanings transmitted in schools and, consequently, efforts to change the content of the school curriculum as part of a strategy to eliminate the perceived biases (or "imbalances") against gays in the available school knowledge: to give homosexuals a "voice" equal to that of heterosexual persons in terms of access to the power structures in society.

One of the major concerns of the Gay movement, therefore, is to look at ways in which the "gay" population can be empowered through knowledge in the school curriculum. Hence the Gay movement supports the idea that to promote knowledge and understanding of a lifestyle, is not the same as advocating it (Osborne 1986:15). The objective is to achieve the dissemination of factual information about gay people in the school curriculum. The stated reason is that in a society that subjects everyone to negative images and social messages about gay and lesbian people, relevant curricular knowledge will help to establish the "principles of self-determination and the basic need for full social and civil rights for all oppressed people" (Newman 1989:209). In addition, factual knowledge is needed to combat "the neglect of homosexuality" as well as the "lack of any information, support or positive role-models for those questioning their sexuality" (Trenchard & Warren 1987:226).

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The underlying intention of the educational aims of the Gay movement is to use the school curriculum, regarded as an important agent in the quest for effecting a radical change in the social consciousness about sexual identity, in an effort to break down the cultural barriers on which the *division* of gender is based (Mac an Ghaill 1991:300). Gays argue that "it is in the classrooms ... that they can develop acceptance of their ... 'lifestyle as a viable alternative to heterosexuality'" (Hurwitz 1993:88). Fundamental to the educational demands of the Gay movement, therefore, is the liberation of all gay students (in and) through the school curriculum. In other words, to mediate a school curriculum in which *relevant* knowledge will empower gay students "to gain some autonomy in an institutional and cultural situation which [has] rendered them almost totally powerless and socially worthless" (quoted in Mac an Ghaill 1991:293). For the Gay movement, schools are not scientific institutions where all feeling is repressed (Mac an Ghaill 1991:296). The demand is, not for a neutral curriculum, but one that will reflect, in terms of gay requirements, *positive teaching* and *appreciative diversity*. The demand is that "certain sets of ideas" (perceived to be part of the *social construction of identity* in terms of homosexuality) – primarily ones that some people may regard as negative – have "to be 'infused' as valuable whether parents think so or not" (Leo 1992:16).

4.4.5.3 THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM: CRITICISM AND DEMANDS**4.4.5.3.1 REPRODUCING THE WESTERN CULTURAL IDEAL**

The school curriculum is criticised because the accent is on the important role that the male – with traditional male attributes like being "objective" and having "heterosexual relationships" – have played in the achievements constituting the Western cultural ideal. It is argued – especially in the light of a growing awareness that there is another side to sexual differentiation – that this is discriminatory and excluding the gay population from their rightful share in the Western cultural heritage; that the worth of subjective bodies of knowledge is not recognised and that the sexual orientation of famous people is not mentioned even if they are known to have had homosexual inclinations; that gays, because they are not associated with traditional "maleness" and "objectivity", are not asked to supply curricular knowledge about

gays and are therefore denied access to the decision-making processes in society (Osborne 1986:15).

4.4.5.3.2 IDEOLOGY OF PATRIARCHY AND GENDER STEREOTYPING

Gays argue that their oppression is evident in the way the school curriculum reflects the traditional ideology of patriarchy; in the way both the formal and the hidden school curriculum reproduces the "normality" of heterosexuality that is "taken for granted within the culture" and therefore "serves to mystify the mechanisms through which male privilege and domination operate" (Mac an Ghaill 1991:294).

Research, for example, has shown that in the traditional curriculum there are "pressures on boys" to appear "invulnerable" (Askew & Ross 1989:91) and girls are "subtly" pressurised to act "boy crazy" (Krysiak 1987:47). Furthermore, that even in biology the division between male and female, categorised according to biological aspects and a general emphasis on the male (in both the physical and affective spheres) as superior to the female (and all female attributes), is discriminatory. Likewise, most illustrations in textbooks depict the male in the dominant position and the female in the subordinate position; the male being logical (or objective) and the female being emotional (or subjective); the male being assertive and the female being weak (Askew & Ross 1989:107).

The criticism is that gays experience the school curriculum as both complex and contradictory. While the male is portrayed as the dominant role model, feminine qualities are devalued. This pattern of authority confuses and alienates the gay student who feels he is "different" (Greenberg 1988:432). Research has shown that because the heterosexual male is taken as "the norm against which everything else is measured ... anything else tends automatically to be defined as deviant, prohibited, or an expression of 'otherness'" (Overfield quoted in Askew & Ross 1989:107). Findings like these form the basis of claims by the Gay movement that the school curriculum reflects a narrow perspective in which the emphasis on "straight masculinity" serves "to devalue, marginalise and threaten femininities and subordinated masculinities" (Mac an Ghaill 1991:294,301); that the emphasis in the curriculum on "learning to be a man" - in relation to the role model of the traditional nuclear family only - results in the acute emotional

pressure of being seen as "failed men"; the lack of knowledge in the curriculum to prevent such stigmatisation (Wilson 1991a:221) is instrumental in excluding gay persons from the power structures in society.

The criticism is that the school curriculum (or the community) provides *no positive images* for the alternative, homosexual, way of being. In addition, the "stereotype that male homosexuals are similar to feminine women" persists although research, for example that of E. Lowell Kelly (Greenberg 1988:432), has shown a very small correlation. It is also argued that the prevailing negative images of those who do not conform to the sexual norm – transmitted by language abuse, such as being called a "fag", or body language, such as "limp-wristed gestures" – have an influence on all so-called "normal" heterosexual students in terms of their opinion or judgement of homosexuality as an alternative way of being (Krysiak 1987:44). Such an "oppressive" situation in schools is aggravated when homosexuality becomes the object of ridicule or even aversion.

Research has shown that the only way to combat negative stereotyping in the school curriculum is to bring the topic into the open. For example, by raising the question of "specific developmental needs of gay ... adolescents", the important question of "identity formation" can be discussed (Newman 1989:206). Gays, however, argue in favour of the discussion of "power relations that exist between and within social groups" (Mac an Ghail 1991:296); in other words, the examination of power relations between heterosexual people as well as power relations between gay people – in terms of gay rights as part of basic human rights – in order to break down the traditional pattern of authority (which recognises a division between the genders) and to help establish homosexuality as an alternative identity in a democratic balance of power in society (Osborne 1986:15).

The Gay movement points out that, in recent times, because the portrayal of gender in school textbooks have received considerable attention, new textbooks tend to show women as being capable of driving buses, becoming engineers or managing banks. Gays see this as a basic and vital step in their power struggle in that it prepares the way for positive images of gays in textbooks and for the transformation of the social consciousness (Osborne 1986:15).

4.4.5.3.3 CURRICULAR DIFFERENTIATION AND STRATIFICATION OF KNOWLEDGE

Gays argue that the stratification of knowledge plays an important role in the "unacceptability" and low "status" of all knowledge about gays; that, in fact, negative stereotyping in the school curriculum is usually done by heterosexuals whose own perception of gays have been "limited" by curricular differentiation (Mac an Ghaill 1991:301). Hence, according to Anderson (1994:33), in an article subtitled "An issue in fairness and humanity ...", the "critical word is *inclusion*"; inclusion of knowledge in which the "worth" of the gay person is acknowledged. In a survey conducted by the London Gay Teenage Group (in 1984) about sixty percent of a group of 460 respondents reported that "within their schools the topic of homosexuality or lesbianism had *never* been mentioned in any lesson at all" (Trenchard & Warren 1987:224).

Reports have shown that information about gays is not even readily available in the reference section of school libraries. It is not so much that sex and sexuality are absent from the school curriculum, it tends to be "invisible" as homosexuality is not something that is talked about (Mac an Ghaill 1991:295). Gays hold that the school curriculum in its sharp division between "right" and "wrong" – in terms of sexual orientation – is an example of knowledge stratification which discriminates against gays as a group. Consequently, only certain student groups, the heterosexual ones, are empowered by the "knowledge" in the school curriculum (Apple & Weis 1986:9).

Especially in terms of sex education, Gays are of the opinion that only a "narrow range of topics" is discussed; that the moral values that are transmitted are "the overt and covert moral values ... transmitted within the context of normative/prescriptive accounts of the two-parent nuclear family lifestyle"; and that, because "all aspects of sexuality other than the institutional form of the monogamous family structure is written out of the curriculum" (Mac an Ghaill 1991:295,297), Gays are effectively excluded from decision-making structures in society.

Furthermore, the complete omission of sex education in most schools is criticised as this, according to Gays, leads to the "desexualisation of school life" (Mac an Ghaill 1991:297). It is pointed out that the

deficiency of factual knowledge about alternative sexual orientations does not foster "mutual understanding and respect between various sections of society". On the contrary, it rather fosters prejudice and leads to the devaluation of gays as a group which effectively serves to disempower them (Osborne 1986:15). This means that - in terms of equality as a basic human right to have the same status as heterosexuals - gays are denied their *human dignity* and their right to become part of the power structure in society (Apple & Weis 1986:11).

4.4.5.3.4 EQUAL ACCESS TO KNOWLEDGE AND THE RELATION TO THE ECONOMY

Findings in various studies (Askew & Ross 1989:107) point to the fact that the most valued knowledge in the school curriculum is closely related to objectivity and therefore the traditional "domain of men" in the economy; in other words, those areas of knowledge related to science and technology to which boys in school have easy access. "Equal access" to curricular knowledge, therefore, poses a very special problem for gays who are quick to point out that a gay student very often may have more affinity with subjectivity and with the arts. The result is that gays criticise the traditional curriculum in which subject choices are arranged to suit the inclinations of heterosexual students only. Gays therefore emphasise that, although it is propagated that the school curriculum is instrumental in the move towards greater economic and social justice, this certainly is not the case for homosexuals (Apple & Weis 1986:9).

However, as gays have found out time and again, equal access to curricular knowledge does not guarantee a homosexual person equal access to the world of work. In many instances the reason why he "won't get a job" is the fact that he is gay and not the fact that he lacks of appropriate knowledge (Mac an Ghaill 1991:292). Nonetheless, the curriculum is being criticised as the agent in alienating the gay student from being accepted on equal social terms.

4.4.5.3.5 SOCIAL LEGITIMATION

Research (Newman 1989:205) in America shows that - despite the trend evident in the latter part of the twentieth century to decriminalise

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homosexuality throughout the Western industrial world (Johannson 1990b:693) – widespread "negative attitudes" are evident whenever homosexuality is mentioned especially in regard to the school curriculum. When a school in Haringey (America) issued a statement that positive images about homosexuality were to be propagated in the school curriculum, Osborne (1986:15), for example, reported that the outcome was a "furore of protesting parents, gay activists and stormy council meetings" during which "the real issue of homosexuality and lesbianism and their place within the school curriculum" was "clouded by uninformed opinion" and "sensationalist reporting".

Furthermore parents – in other words the community – can, and sometimes do, thwart efforts by the state to implement sex education in schools. In the United States, for example, "a group of parents, acting through the courts", challenged the state's mandate and succeeded in preventing the implementation of compulsory sex education in the Jefferson County Public Schools (Zady & Duckworth 1991:25). This was done mainly because knowledge pertaining to sex education is not regarded as "suitable" knowledge to be transmitted in schools. Some reasons for the outrage against sex education were given as: "*They're pushing homosexuality as a way of controlling the population*" (quoted in Zady & Duckworth 1991:25) and, it would "lower a child's resistance to the advances of child molesters and homosexuals" (Zady & Duckworth 1991:25). Moreover, teachers willing to take part in a voluntary sex education programme "became vulnerable to attacks by parents"; and parents in support of such a programme remained silent (Zady & Duckworth 1991:26).

The Gay movement is critical of – and is trying to uncover – the unyielding identification "with the structures" that constitute social legitimization of those parts of the school curriculum they find discriminating. Studies about gays have revealed that much of the confusion experienced by gay students in school is caused by "contradictions in the public-private social worlds": the school curriculum does not reflect all the alternatives to the dominant cultural conception of sexual roles and family life which, although perhaps not publicly acceptable, nevertheless already exist in society (Mac an Ghail 1991:297). It is argued that, in the structure of sex education in

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particular, no provision is made for the reality of a moral order which – despite the silence symptomatic of "public" negation – exists in society. In view of this the way sex and sexuality are dealt with in the school curriculum is criticised because it not a true reflection of the social reality outside the school (Mac an Ghaill 1991:295).

4.4.5.3.6 THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER

The Gay movement holds that "you cannot teach someone to be gay" but you can promote the "equal worth" of each student (Osborne 1986:15). In this respect the role of the teacher is seen as important, especially in terms of tolerance and establishing a positive image of homosexuality. Teachers are criticised for their role in the oppression of gays: for using derogative language such as calling a weak student a "poof"; for condoning abusive language and hostility towards homosexuality by not effectively challenging it (Trenchard & Warren 1987:226); and for not being "convinced that the problem is a serious one" in spite of the "vague intellectual assent" they give "to the proposition of equal rights for gays" (Lilley quoted in Mac an Ghaill 1991:299).

It is argued that teachers (and school curricula) have a "responsibility to ensure that the choices that pupils make are informed choices" (Osborne 1986:15). Children do not hear about homosexuality for the first time in the classroom and it is important that teachers are in possession of the knowledge necessary to explain alternative sexual views. Not to impose them, but "to encourage pupils to challenge ideas if necessary, but above all to learn reason" (Osborne 1986:15) and, hence, to put all the students in possession of knowledge that will liberate the gay student from social oppression (Leo 1992:16).

4.4.5.3.7 THE ROLE OF THE STATE

The important role of the state in sanctioning curricular knowledge is recognised by the Gay movement, especially in terms of their concern with sex education in schools. The criticism is that "official prescriptions about sex education ... operate with an almost uniform commitment to heterosexuality, procreation and 'traditional' role relationships between men and women" (Aggleton quoted in Mac an Ghaill

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1991:296). For example, in 1986, in an attempt to implement widespread changes to the schooling system in Britain, it was explicitly stated in government publications that the requirements for sex education was regard for traditional family values and moral considerations (Baker 1994:36). The reason for this stand, as Mrs Margaret Thatcher said (Baker 1994:46), was that at present "children who need to be taught to respect traditional moral values are being taught they have an inalienable right to be gay".

The reaction of gays to government prescriptions and parliamentary speeches like these is that the absence of gays and lesbians in the knowledge content of the school curriculum "is not an arbitrary oversight but a systematic policy of omission" (Mac an Ghail 1991:300). Gays claim that they experience this as social oppression; as being removed from the school curriculum insidiously. The Gay movement aims at changing the "traditional" view of the government because they see the role of the state as important, not only in the process of the legitimation of knowledge, but also in the protection of the basic human rights of all groups, also those of the gays, to share cultural resources.

4.4.6 SUMMARY

Fundamental to all the criticism cited by gays is that the school curriculum is both discriminatory and oppressive in the way it transmits the dominant culture which includes, what they call, the *misrepresentation* of homosexuality in the Western cultural ideal. The aim of the Gay movement is to establish the identity of the homosexual as an alternative identity and in addition to the two traditional identities in the *division* male/female: to establish a "more" democratic balance of power.

Although there is evidence of a growing awareness among informed people that, especially in terms of *humanness* (and the Declaration of Human Rights), the "very silent and gay minority among our students need not be left in the closet" (Krysiak 1987:47), a change in the allegedly discriminatory balance of power (as it is reflected in the pattern of discrimination against gay students in curricular knowledge) is dependent upon a widespread change in the social attitude towards sexual orientation and homosexuality (Schofield 1965:205). If the case of

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Feminism is taken as an example, a change in social attitude is not something that is acquired overnight; it needs time and the availability – in society and in schools – of knowledge deemed *legitimate* by governments and by popular social consent (Schofield 1965:193).

4.5 PEOPLE'S EDUCATION AND THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM**4.5.1 INTRODUCTION**

Demands on the school curriculum in the third example of a specific struggle for power, *People's Education*, will be viewed in its *South African context*. This struggle may be seen as part of a worldwide movement for the liberation of the "people" from varying degrees of "oppression" by ruling classes, for, as Roger Simons (NECC and UWC 1990:25) once said, "to define a pedagogy ... is to define a political vision".

In terms of its defined "political vision" for South Africa, the aim of People's Education has been realised insofar as political power is firmly established in the hands of supporters of People's Education since April 1994. The implementation of People's Education is, however, not yet a reality. Only the future will tell whether People's Education will, in practice, meet the aspirations of the power struggle to implement a democratic balance of power in society.

4.5.2 WHAT IS PEOPLE'S EDUCATION?

Amongst black South Africans -- usually referred to in educational circles as "disadvantaged", "culturally deprived" and "economically left behind" -- there was a growing perception that their only "salvation" was to "be brought into contact with the existing school curriculum" (Sonn 1987:ii). It was in reaction to contact with the existing school curriculum, which among black resistance groups was regarded as "education for domination" by white Afrikaner South Africans, that Father Smangalis Mkatshwa (Van den Heever 1987:1), a keynote speaker at a Conference under the auspices of the Soweto Parents' Crisis Committee (December 1985), formulated People's Education as a

people's education ... which prepares people for total human liberation; ... which helps people to be creative, to develop a critical

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mind, ... that prepares people for full participation in all social, political or cultural spheres of society.

Eric Molobi (Van den Heever 1987:2-3) of the National Education Crisis Committee (NECC) stressed that

since education as we have known it has been used as a tool of oppression, People's Education will be an education that must help us to achieve people's power.

At the National Education Crisis Committee (NECC), held in Cape Town in October 1987, Jakes Gerwel (1987:4) said:

People's Education is not just another academic experiment. People's Education has been conceived and developed out of the crucible of struggle and it gets its full meaning and significance if it is read and understood in its full social, political context of People's Education for People's Power.

Franklin Sonn (1987:ii) focuses on another aspect when he states:

In South Africa, however, ... [People's] Education in the main signifies an urge for *relevancy* of the learning material ... It puts the legacy of Africa in a strongly positive light and is critical of White or Western values.

According to these views the concept of People's Education has been developed by "the people" (mainly the black majority) in South Africa to improve the quality of their lives and to "replace apartheid education in general and Bantu education in particular" (Njobe 1990:9). People's Education has to be seen in terms of a cultural revolution and a socio-political struggle. As an attempt "at reshaping" both education and the balance of power in South Africa (Gerwel 1987:4) it became an integral part of the struggle for liberation - the struggle for people's power - in South Africa. Involved in this struggle were not only students and teachers but the whole community that was striving towards liberation.

Fundamental to People's Education - as was made clear by the March 1986 Conference in Durban - is the aim to "democratise" education insofar as the knowledge content of the school curriculum is not controlled by the state (*cf* Chapter 6.3.3); is related to the social reality; and empowers all "the people". People's Education resists the existing school curriculum which, according to the people, reproduces a

dominant ideology that denies collective action (Erwin 1987:15). The concept of People's Education includes political mass action to throw "aside old bonds" in order to create a new and "positive" identity; to move away from an established racial order to a non-racial "democracy"; and to move away from a paternalistic apartheid school curriculum controlled by an oppressive central government towards a "democratic" curriculum which takes account of "the people" (Erwin 1987:14). People's Education is propagated as being truly democratic in that it is a parent-teacher-pupil-state-alliance (Njobe 1990:20; Gardiner 1986:58).

4.5.3 ACCENTS IN THE ISSUES ADDRESSED BY PEOPLE'S EDUCATION

4.5.3.1 THE INTERNATIONAL POWER CRISIS AND PAOLO FREIRE

The demands for the liberation (democratisation) of the school curriculum is not limited to South Africa. In America, and also in Europe, the student revolts of the sixties and seventies - symptomatic of a widespread power crisis in society - resulted in the disillusionment with both schools and curricula. Critics of the existing educational system came up with a number of "alternatives" which - irrespective of whether they were met by dismay or approval - forced attention on the curriculum as a "power structure". Included in the propositions for "alternative" strategies were the deschooling ideas of Ivan Illich (*Deschooling Society* 1972) and John Holt (*Instead of Education* 1977), as well as the well-known "democratisation" of the school curriculum put forward by Paolo Freire (*Pedagogy for the Oppressed* 1983).

In particular it was the - for that time - revolutionary ideas of the South American educational theorist, Paolo Freire, which were to influence critical thinking about the role of curricular knowledge in justifying or challenging power structures in societies worldwide. In research done by Roodt (1993) it was shown that the influence of his ideas is clearly visible in most of the guidelines for People's Education. It will therefore be necessary to give a brief outline of his work.

Paolo Freire, who was born into a working class family, lived and did most of his work to combat illiteracy (which eventually gave rise to his educational theory) in Brazil - a colony under the rule of Spain and characterised by a sharply divided social system. What is important is

that Paolo Freire, in formulating his educational theory, has in mind a completely new power structure in society; in other words, a "cultural revolution" (Freire 1983:157). Such a cultural revolution, according to Freire, "takes the total society to be reconstructed, including all human activities, as the object of its remolding action" (Freire 1983:157). Furthermore, he says, "the culture which is culturally recreated through revolution is the fundamental instrument for this reconstruction" (Freire 1983:157). In this cultural revolution the school curriculum – as well as the teacher as the interpreter of the curriculum (Freire 1983:67) – has an important role to play in "the revolutionary regime's maximum effort at *conscientizacao* [changing the consciousness of the oppressed]" (Freire 1983:157).

In Freire's pedagogy for liberation, a "democratised" curriculum has as its aim the heightened awareness of a particular situation in such a way that its susceptibility to transformation and change is recognised and appreciated by all – by both the oppressors and the oppressed (Freire 1983:19–20). In this way power will be put in the hands of the oppressed.

4.5.3.2 THE ORIGIN OF THE PERCEIVED CONTRADICTIONS IN THE SOCIO-POLITICAL REALITY IN SOUTH AFRICA

In all countries affected by colonialism, colonists are invariably associated with political domination and the exploitation of natural as well as of human resources. Underlying the aim of colonial education is a striving to "civilise" (that is to change the "identity" of) the indigenous people. The bodies of knowledge that constitute the value systems, culture and way of life of the indigenous people are not regarded as culturally on a par with the bodies of knowledge that constitute the value systems, culture, and way of life of the colonisers. Colonialism cultivates a perception that identification with, and acceptance of, "civilisation" as represented by the colonisers will guarantee full participation in the power structure of "colonial" society. The degree to which the indigenous people are able to assimilate colonialist civilisation is, however, mainly dependent upon a school curriculum and examination system authorised by the colonialist government (Njobe 1990:31,30).

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In South Africa the Bantu Education Act, Act No 47 of 1953 – which replaced the, by then, ineffective mission schools – was not a complete break with previous educational history in colonialist South Africa. According to Njobe (1990:24) this Act, constituting a significant part of the apartheid system, is "an advanced stage of colonial education showing the most ruthless features". Nevertheless, the implementation of the Bantu Education Act resulted in a new educational order which was the outcome of a political power struggle won by the National Party in 1948. As such it may be seen as part of "a coherent response by the [new] ruling class to certain crucial aspects of the social crisis" and the changing economic reality (Hyslop 1987:21). The existing institutions were not perceived as adequate to guarantee the social order in terms of the envisaged power structure of the "new" political ideal. The Bantu Education Act of 1953 was an attempt at imposing a new social order by means of a school curriculum. This Act, although it had an "exceptionally racist and class discriminatory character" (Hyslop 1987:12) – reflecting the prevailing nature of a society not unique for the time – was also the first move towards mass schooling in South Africa (Hyslop 1987:22; Van der Mescht 1965:48–53).

For the first time the control of education in South Africa was firmly in the hands of a central government and for the first time a large portion of black youth went to school. The social and economic needs of central government were met, yet the high level of political repression, evident in the school curriculum, presented contradictions which were to generate widespread unrest among the black population in South Africa (Hyslop 1987:21–22; Van der Mescht 1969:53–54).

4.5.3.3 PEOPLE'S EDUCATION AND THE FREEDOM STRUGGLE IN SOUTH AFRICA

It was the implementation of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in black schools that prompted the militant mass student action of 1976 (Cillie-verslag 1979:556). However, the basic unrest was caused by dissatisfaction with the balance of power in the economic reality (capitalism) and the socio-political reality (apartheid). Government attempts to combat the unrest – like the more lenient Education and Training Act, Act No 90 of 1979, which gave attention to free textbooks

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and better financing for black education – were not acceptable (Swart 1988:89). Critics did not see this as an answer to the problems raised by the unrest; this legislation was seen as a means of alleviating the problem of a shortage of skilled labour and as a way of creating a black elite in accordance with a West European cultural model (Swart 1988:89).

The opposition and antagonism of most black communities towards the Bantu Education Act was mainly due to a perception that the school curriculum was being used as a tool for manipulation; as a means to implement the apartheid ideals which included "disempowering" the blacks in social, economic and political terms and inculcating an alien "culture". In the perception of black people the word "culture" was "stigmatised" as it came to be associated with "state-imposed identity" (Moodley 1987:11). The result was the birth of the Black Consciousness Movement. Their aim was the construction of a "positive" identity for "the people", which meant "the building of a new awareness, the establishment of a new basic dignity, the framing of a new attitude of mind, a rediscovery of the history of the people, and a cultural revival" (quoted in Swart 1988:88).

Consequently, increased school boycotts led to an announcement by the ANC (at that time still a banned organisation with its headquarters in Lusaka) that, because schools should remain part of the struggle and hence not be sacrificed in the struggle for liberation, all future efforts would have to be co-ordinated. The First National Consultative Conference (University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 28–29 December 1985) was held under the auspices of the Soweto Parents' Crisis Committee (SPCC). The slogan for this conference was "People's Education for People's Power". People's power was perceived as "the collective strength of the community" and "an expression of the will of the people" (Hartshorne quoted in Van den Heever 1987:2). It was at this conference that the concept of People's Education took shape. At the time People's Education, as a movement, saw the prevailing school curriculum as unjust and discriminatory; as instrumental in oppressing blacks and keeping them in a subservient position.

The aim of this conference was to put an end to fifteen months of school boycotts. In the *first* place, it was stressed that the school was

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the only viable location from which to mobilise children for the struggle for liberation. And, in the *second* place, that school boycotts had to be used with discretion so as not to lose its political impact. Children had to go back to school provided certain demands to gain access to power structures in society were met by the government within three months (Swart 1988:94). A resolution was passed that demands for breaking down discriminatory "divisions" in curricular knowledge would form an integral part of an organised movement to liberate the "people" from all the oppressive "divisions" throughout the community; and that, because "the schools and the community are inseparable" (quoted in Swart 1988:93), the teacher would have to play an important role in preparing students to take part in the struggle for power.

A Second National Education Consultative Conference (Rajput Hall, Durban, 29-30 March 1986) was held - this time under the auspices of the new co-ordinating body, the National Education Crisis Committee (NECC). Although the Minister of National Education claimed that attention had been given to all the demands of the 1985 conference, delegates argued that it was not the case. Consequently the focus in all the resolutions passed at this conference was on People's Education - on demands that placed education firmly in a context of economic, political, and ideological campaigns, "thereby politicising education more completely than before and ... spreading the burden of the struggle for freedom across the different sectors of society" (Gardiner 1986:57). It was decided that students would neither drop any of their demands for changes to the "oppressive" balance of power evident in curricular knowledge, nor "submit meekly to Bantu Education" (Gardiner 1986:58). Suggested strategies to further the cause of People's Education included mass action, "such as rent and consumer boycotts" and "mass stayaways", which would involve all the members of the community in the struggle against discrimination in the school curriculum (Gardiner 1986:58). Central to all discussions were that students would not be urged to go back to school unless a People's Education curriculum was implemented. As one of the speakers, Zwelakhe Sisulu (Van den Heever 1987:1), insisted: "We are no longer demanding the same education as Whites, since this is education for domination". Instead, the demand was for "education that liberates, education that puts the people in command of their lives" (Van den Heever 1987:2).

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In an effort to advance the implementation of People's Education, a Third National Education Consultative Conference was held at the University of the Western Cape in May 1986. The accent was on the preparation of alternative History and English curricula, as these were felt to be the most abusive and discriminating sections of the existing school curriculum. The demand was that these alternative curricula would have to be implemented in white schools as well; white children, too, had to be prepared for a future in a "new" and democratic South Africa in which all people had "worth". In reaction to the specific demands formulated at these conferences, a government spokesman agreed that in certain instances the content of the curriculum was indeed irrelevant or alien to black students. The government agreed to attend to these issues, should the National Education Crisis Committee (NECC) put forward scientifically justified proposals (Swart 1988:97).

Unrest continued while enormous pressures for changes in schools and school curricula were building up - from within black Education and especially from the teachers. This led to a Human Sciences Research Council investigation into South African Education subsequent to which the government released the De Lange Report (HSRC 1981) which revealed gross inequalities in the provision of education for the different cultural groups in South Africa. The focus in this report was on the academic bias of the curriculum to the detriment of technical and career-oriented education. One of the important proposals in the De Lange Report - that of one educational authority for all the population groups in South Africa - was rejected by the government. As a result radical groups argued that the proposed educational reform in South Africa was simply a modern version of apartheid; an attempt "to meet the general political demand for educational equality and the provision of an appropriately skilled labour force, while at the same time attempting to meet the needs of control in an apartheid state" (Kallaway quoted in Swart 1988:92). Consequently, most demands in the struggle for power in the 1980s focused on the linking of students and workers in the struggle for power (Erwin 1987:17). The perception was that workers were strong. By virtue of their collective action, in other words, strikes - which could have a devastating impact on the economy - they had the power to focus the attention of the government on the urgency of the demands for People's Education.

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The problem of the "lost generation" (children whose opportunities to attend school were jeopardised by the freedom struggle) was aggravated by increased school boycotts. In 1986 – a year which was to be a year of virtually no schooling for blacks – there was an almost total collapse of the "culture of learning". It became evident to opposing groups that the schools were being used as a major vehicle for a complete cultural revolution (Swart 1988:90). People's Education, which had started as action against a discriminatory education system, had soon developed into a large-scale political struggle. For People's Education more than school reform or "giving in to demands" was at stake: after the release of Mr Nelson Mandela (the current State President) by Mr F.W. de Klerk (State President at the time) in 1990 – one of the student demands – there was no real improvement in the crisis around the school and the school curriculum (Grebe 1992:9; Roodt 1993:134).

It became clear that it was the traditional power structure that was being challenged: the aim of students (with the help of teachers and the community) was to pressurise the authorities (which could even include their own parents) into realising that they did not want to become part of the "oppressive" apartheid system – apartheid being perceived as a political, economic, social and educational totality in which the "worth" of the "people" was not acknowledged (Gardiner 1986:57). In the eyes of People's Education *collective action* was used as a means of breaking "the chains of individualism and the *division* built into the [existing] educational system. This break was crucial and opened political space ... it altered possibilities and consciousness. It challenged the conventional notions of teaching and it challenged the authoritarian structures of schools" (Erwin 1987:16; italics added by this author). The perception was that this would be the beginning of a new future; a future in which everyone has a "voice" in a democratic balance of power – with "no racism or exploitation, no apartheid, no inequality of class or sex" (Christie 1986:245).

This same perception is reflected in the White Paper on Education and Training of February 1995 (1995:51) – released by the Government of the "new" South Africa in support of People's Education – which states that:

The rights of all persons to equality, human dignity, freedom and security of the person ... and the rights of children ... have a

direct or indirect bearing on the administrative and professional conduct of the education system.

4.5.4 PEOPLE'S EDUCATION AND THE STRUGGLE FOR KNOWLEDGE POWER

4.5.4.1 PEOPLE'S EDUCATION AND KNOWLEDGE

Underlying the concept of People's Education is the assumption that, in order to overcome "oppressive" cultural barriers in the social power structure, in order to eradicate cultural "divisions" in the school curriculum, knowledge should be *democratised*. People's Education argues that "truth" should neither be "limited to the formulation and interpretation of events by the academy" (Gardiner quoted in McKay & Romm 1992:118) nor be in the hands of politicians only, but should be the outcome of a parent-teacher-pupil-state alliance (Njobe 1990:20). In other words, that neither books, nor teachers, nor experts are the only sources of knowledge, but that teachers and students and "members of the community" should "participate in the generation and accreditation of knowledge" (quoted in McKay & Romm 1992:118).

People's Education does not subscribe to the positive epistemology. It is argued that knowledge is not objective or neutral but subjective and that there is, not only one, but more than one truth. As *truth* is determined by the *social context* and dependent upon the outcome of an action (or the utilisation of knowledge) an experience may have more than one interpretation. Consequently, because knowledge is socially constructed, it is possible to *transform knowledge* so that it reflects the worth of the "people" and becomes a tool for emancipation (Moodley 1987:11). People's Education does not distinguish between the status of head and hand, hence theoretical knowledge is not regarded as "more important" than practical knowledge, or scientifically justified objective knowledge as "more important" than subjective knowledge. In fact, not any body of knowledge is regarded as more important than any other body of knowledge (NECC and UWC 1990:25).

Because of Paolo Freire's influence on People's Education it has to be noted that, according to Freire (1983:58), knowledge is not "a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those

whom they consider to know nothing". In other words, knowledge cannot, for example, be transmitted from the teacher to the student in a final form (or banking system), the notion that some people are in a state of "absolute ignorance" while others are in possession of "knowledge", does not take into account that knowledge is also a process of inquiry. Freire furthermore argues that, because knowledge "emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the ... continuing, hopeful inquiry men pursue in the world, with the world and with each other" (Freire 1983:58), neither language nor knowledge "can exist without a structure to which they refer" (Freire 1983:85). Hence the "people's" perception of their social reality is crucial in determining either the objectivity or the richness, significance, plurality, transformations and historical composition of knowledge or "truth" (Freire 1983:86) .

4.5.4.2 THE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF PEOPLE'S EDUCATION

What is evident - in the close ties between the freedom struggle and People's Education - is that the transfer of political power (in other words a complete change in the prevailing power structure) is indispensable to People's Education with its aim of "correcting all the adverse effects" of colonialist and apartheid education. The aim is to break the existing pattern of authority: to challenge both the right of the government to control "divisions" of "worth" and to decide which knowledge is of most "worth", as well as the right of the adult, be it male or female, to decide upon the knowledge to be included in the school curriculum. The aim is the "democratisation" of the curriculum, which means that as many people as possible, including the community and the students themselves, shall have the right to determine "who shall teach, who shall be taught, what shall be taught and how it shall be taught in their schools" (Van den Heever 1987:11-12).

Underlying the critical stance of People's Education is the assumption that whether domination or liberation, it can be directly linked to the possession or lack of "relevant" knowledge. The aim of People's Education is a school curriculum in which the "relevant" knowledge will lead to social transformation and will assist the development of a new liberated personality with the focus on independence and self-

determination, self-determination in the service of collective interest (Njobe 1990:51). The focus, therefore, is on a new curriculum content – appropriate knowledge and skills as well as a value system and attitudes essential for service to a new national order in which collective interest is more important than individual interest (Wolpe 1991:80; Njobe 1990:53). The aim of People's Education is complete control over the school and formal education (Grebe 1992:8); the demand is "People's Education for People's Power".

The research done by Roodt in 1993 showed that the influence of Paolo Freire's critical educational theory (*cf* Chapters 4.5.3.1.1 & 4.5.3.4) is clearly discernible in most of the social, political and educational aims of People's Education. The main aims of People's Education have been formulated as the following (*cf* CACE 1988:6-8; Roodt 1993:124-126; NECC 1986:60-70; Freire 1983):

1. The total rejection of education for apartheid, which is education for domination (Freire: education should be liberating).
2. The struggle towards a non-racist South Africa as part of the close relationship between education and politics inherent in People's Education. The curriculum should make provision for knowledge pertinent to this struggle (Freire: education cannot be neutral as it is closely related to politics).
3. The development of a school curriculum for "People's Power"; People's Education is a political and educational struggle not only for complete political and social emancipation but also for a new and emancipated curriculum; not a curriculum in which knowledge is presented as a "finality" but a participatory curriculum in which the teacher plays an important role (Freire: the banking system in education is not acceptable).
4. The legitimization of the school curriculum by an alliance of all the people in the community (Freire: knowledge, which is not final, emerges in dialogue with each other and with the social reality).
5. The control of People's Education by the masses for the benefit of the masses (Freire: education should empower the masses insofar as what they know becomes important too).
6. The provision of universal education: All the people, even those outside the formal education system should become part of the

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People's Education system (Freire: the recreated culture has to reach everyone).

7. The accent in People's Education as opposed to the authoritarian and individualistic values inherent in the colonialist system, will be on the democratic values of co-operation and active participation (Freire: the democratisation of education is important and needs the right approach, in this respect *conscientizacao* is important).
8. The development of creative and critical thinking in preparation for life will take a central position in the school curriculum (Freire: the social reality and knowledge has to be reconstructed).
9. The development of educational practices appropriate for the implementation of these principles will, to a large extent, be the responsibility of the teacher (Freire: the role of the teacher is of paramount importance in education for liberation).
10. The complete implementation of the liberated school curriculum as advocated by People's Education; the *status quo* has to be overthrown and apartheid eliminated (Freire: the implementation of a liberating education requires political power).

4.5.4.3 THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM: CRITICISM AND DEMANDS

4.5.4.3.1 REPRODUCING THE WESTERN CULTURAL IDEAL

At the root of most of the criticism that People's Education brought against the existing (traditional) school curriculum in South Africa was that this curriculum reflected the Western cultural ideal as established by colonialist rule. This included the values, skills and knowledge pertinent to capitalism, domination by the white male, Eurocentric (white) high culture, academic excellence and individualism – all of which were claimed to be alien to indigenous people and did not take account of the indigenous cultural heritage. The "academic" curriculum (with its European roots) was not acceptable to People's Education; the proposed aim of People's Education was to inculcate the worth of the indigenous people and the value systems of their own traditional cultures (Grebe 1992:7).

The bias towards individualism and competitiveness was criticised because of the divide and rule principle implicit in the idea of individual development and individual achievement; because of the

perception that social action defined by the importance of objective bodies of knowledge was discriminatory in that it was the "interaction of self-contained and self-seeking individuals", while the validity of collective action (defined by the importance of subjective bodies of knowledge), which was an important characteristic of the indigenous culture, was completely denied (Erwin 1987:15).

The demand for a People's Education curriculum was based on the argument that the Western cultural school curriculum did not make provision for the desired kinds of knowledge, attitudes, values and skills which would contribute to the transformation of a liberated society in which all cultures would be of equal worth. People's English, for example, could make clear the evils of apartheid and enable children to use English in a "non-racial, non-sexist and non-elitist" way, as well as "determine their own destinies and ... free themselves from oppression" (quoted in Swart 1988:120). Reading material could be selected to assist the freedom struggle; excerpts from the Freedom Charter of the ANC or from the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights could be used as reading material (Swart 1988:121). In this way not only the dominant European power structure, but also the people would be empowered by the knowledge in the school curriculum.

4.5.4.3.2 IDEOLOGY OF PATRIARCHY AND CLASS STEREOTYPING

In March 1986 Graeme Bloch (1987:9) said of the South African school curriculum that it reflected a "top-down, authoritarian, sexist" social reality. People's Education argued that the ideology of patriarchy - apartheid with its accent on white male domination - evident in, for example, a history syllabus depicting South African history as a heroic epoch of the white Afrikaner nation in which all the heroes are white Afrikaner males, was not acceptable to the majority of the people in South Africa. People's Education was critical of a history curriculum which inculcated a sense of "rightlessness" in a great majority of school children in South African schools (Hyslop 1987:21); a school curriculum in which blacks were relegated to a subaltern position of useless bystanders or even "cattle thieves" (Van den Heever 1987:13). This was seen as a biased interpretation of history; as discriminatory in that indigenous history was seen only from the dominant white (apartheid) perspective.

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Kogila Moodley (in 1987:8) pointed out that much of the protest in black schools was based upon over-regulation and an over-emphasis of submission to authority both of which were perceived as unjust and irrelevant (Moodley 1987:8). For example, there was too much stress on the "great man" and "great nation" approach (The World Book Encyclopedia (6) 1975:22). Some of the questions asked by People's Education were: "Why is it that we spend so long learning about the history of Europe when we learn nothing of the history of Africa?" (Bloch 1987:9). Why is it that the knowledge of one group is important while the knowledge of another group is not worthwhile? People's Education pointed out that, in History, one of the subjects most suited to inculcating values, the "problems which the democratic community ["people"] have with the syllabus of South African history in high schools" included the following:

- A conscious effort to coerce blacks into accepting their status of second class citizens as set out for them in the syllabus.
- The attempt to create a sympathetic understanding for the various structures of the [oppressive] S.A. government (Van den Heever 1987:13).

People's education stressed that black children were exposed to the content of textbooks in which there were no positive depictions of blacks as a group (Moodley 1987:12): often it was a case of the "Black as the permanent villain and the White as the innocent and noble victim" (Sonn 1987:ii). The claim was that class stereotyping of knowledge in, for example, the illustrations in primary readers resulted in an "identity crisis ... in the minds of black children who are forced to internalise the perceptions" that the "place of the black people" as "devastatingly emphasised in books of this nature" is "in the kitchen as servant" (Van den Heever 1987:32). People's Education demanded that, to create a perspective of a non-racial and democratic society in the minds of all children, it would be necessary to adapt illustrations; knowledge would have to be "democratic" insofar as it would have to reflect democratic social relations in an inter-racial and multi-cultural society (Van den Heever 1987:34). It was argued that in terms of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights all people have the same right to partake in cultural resources and to become part of the decision-making structures in society.

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Supporters of People's Education stressed that children had to be made aware of the fact that history of the ordinary people, as a rule, was not taken up in history textbooks; that history was about those people who have power – a minority group that throughout the ages had the power to influence and control the lives of millions of people (Swart 1988:121). The demand was for a People's Education school curriculum; a curriculum that would provide the black youth with the "relevant" knowledge to empower them in their struggle for freedom from white oppression (Swart 1988:110). For example, in Geography, instead of saying that Black South Africans live on 13% of the land, the same information could be used to point out past or present injustices. Children could be taught "that 80% of South Africans are dumped on 13% of the land" (quoted in Swart 1988:104).

Another criticism was that, not only the formal curriculum, but also the hidden curriculum, projected a decidedly discriminatory cultural hierarchy in schools (Moodley 1987:12). While the attitude towards some black children was dismissive because of their cultural background or political alliance (Moodley 1987:12), there was the day to day humiliation due to the effects of racial discrimination (Njobe 1990:62). In some schools blacks were not allowed at all, in other schools, although they were allowed, they were not accepted by all the children. In most such schools neither the school curriculum, nor the composition of the teaching staff, reflected the multi-cultural diversity of society in a positive way.

4.5.4.3.3 CURRICULAR DIFFERENTIATION AND ACCESS TO THE ECONOMY

People's Education was not in agreement with a school curriculum in which academic excellence rather than practical skills, scientific knowledge rather than communication between people, was seen as more important to meet the needs of national development (Njobe 1990:63). People's Education pointed out that people with theoretical or objective knowledge should not have more "status" than people with practical or subjective knowledge.

It was argued that the so-called "standards" that were upheld by the academic curriculum – were the same standards which were the basis of

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the stratification of knowledge in the school curriculum (Moodley 1987:9). The consequence of which was that some knowledge was important and gave access to money and social power, while other knowledge was looked down upon, was worth nothing in terms of money, and hardly regarded as "human". As Adrienne Bird so emphatically pointed out in *DSA in depth* in February 1994: "At the core of this kind of set-up is the notion that those who own think while the rest simply work".

The capitalists refer to you as mill hands, farm hands, factory hands ... hands ... hands ... hands ... hands, a capitalist would feel insulted if you call him a hand, he's a head. The trouble is he owns your head and your hands (quoted in Bird 1994:43).

The supporters of People's Education argued that the existing school curriculum, in which the accent was on sophisticated science and technology, served to reproduce the dominant and oppressive power structure mainly because such a curriculum was more applicable to life and industry in developed Western countries (Erwin 1987:14; Njobe 1990:63). Such a curriculum was not relevant to the economic reality of the majority of students - and therefore alienating. The demand was for a People's Education curriculum in which the focus was on practical skills which would benefit not only a few - the future elite group - but would provide the workforce and the technological skills for the benefit of a new and democratic economy in which all knowledge would be of equal worth; a school curriculum which would grant all students access to the power structure in society (Njobe 1990:64; Erwin 1987:16).

4.5.4.3.4 SOCIAL LEGITIMATION

People's Education saw schools and the content of the curriculum as "vital ... for the development of democracy" (NECC and UWC 1990:25). It was argued that "*people cannot be developed. They can only develop themselves ... by full participation as an equal in the life of the community in which they live*" and work (quoted in NECC and UWC 1990:24).

According to People's Education it was impossible for the majority of children at school to identify with the existing school curriculum in which they were denied any "worth". It was argued that, because the knowledge content of the existing school curriculum was not legitimate in terms of the "social conscience" of the majority of South Africans (as

supporters of People's Education), the Western cultural values taught in schools were not relevant to the social needs of the majority of these children; that the accent on ethnic and racial exclusivity was gross discrimination against the black majority (Moodley 1987:9). The demand was for legitimate curricular knowledge that would make provision for the multi-cultural structure of the population (Moodley 1987:9); would focus on "the social constraints" that prevented a "democratic society" from emerging (NECC and UWC 1990:23); and, would serve the "real" needs of the children and the community (Njobe 1990:64).

4.5.4.3.5 THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER

In the concept of People's Education the role of the teacher is significant in more than one way. Teachers, not radical activists, are seen to be the most powerful agents in the implementation of People's Education. The role of the teacher is "to question what and how we teach, in whose interests we are working, and the goals for which we are striving" (NECC and UWC 1990:25). In South Africa – in an effort to implement People's Education – teachers were expected to leave the well-trodden paths; they had to use their reasoning (their power of rational persuasion) to immunise students against the indoctrination of the Western colonialist school curriculum (Moodley 1987:11). Before the ANC Government had come into power in South Africa, this meant that black teachers were pressed to reveal their political inclinations.

Furthermore, any teacher who dared to proceed with schoolwork as prescribed, or attempted a neutral stance, was branded as an agent of apartheid (Swart 1988:98). It was the demand of People's Education that teachers become involved in community struggles (Gardiner 1986:60); not accept the hierarchical patterns in the existing social order; inculcate a critical awareness into all students; and, as the interpreter of the existing curriculum, use the curriculum as a tool for the emancipation of the oppressed students from social domination and economic exploitation by the *status quo* (NECC and UWC 1990:23–25).

People's Education criticised the role of teachers in the traditional (existing) curriculum – that of transmitting set bodies of knowledge. It was argued that teachers had to "move away from seeing teaching primarily as an act of transmitting predigested knowledge" (NECC and

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UWC 1990:24), discard the traditional "banking system" (cf Freire 1983:62) and move away from rote learning. According to People's Education the teacher has the power to create alternative curriculum knowledge, not as the "expert" or the "bearer of unquestioned truth", but through ongoing dialogue; teachers have to understand that "People's Education is a relationship, and that it is a democratic relationship" in which pupils would respect authority for its competence rather than fear it for its powers (NECC and UWC 1990:24). In this way, Moodley (1987:11) for example argued, a teacher would live up to political relevancy in the best democratic tradition.

In a somewhat different vein Wally Morrow (1994:28), also a supporter of People's Education, said in 1994 that, in the "new" South Africa, teachers would have to be "critical agents in the establishment of the sphere of formal learning, and we are misled by the idea that learners could take the lead in this project". What is clear, however, is that, in one way or another, supporters of People's Education acknowledge the fact that teachers would have to take the lead: either in effecting a social transformation or in preparing students for the emerging power structure in the "new" South Africa under the dominant influence of ANC rule.

4.5.4.3.6 THE ROLE OF THE STATE

People's Education advocated a parent-teacher-pupil-state alliance as the most democratic way to authorise the content of the school curriculum (Njobe 1990:22). The argument put forward was that for much of the history of modern South Africa the state merely imposed an oppressive school curriculum without consultation with parents, teachers or students: resistance was constrained by edict or force - in other words legitimisation of the school curriculum was achieved by edict or force.

According to People's Education the state, as the guardian of social stability, should not sanction the "legitimacy" of knowledge that is enslaving, nor allow discriminatory "divisions" regarding the "worth" of different sections of the community, but allow democratic participation of all sectors of the community in order to achieve knowledge that would be legitimate and relevant to the community in which the school curriculum is utilised.

4.5.5 SUMMARY

The professed aim of People's Education in the South African context was to implement an "emancipatory" school curriculum which was aimed at *social transformation*: the elimination of all forms of discrimination or "divisions" in the school curriculum, be it social class, race or gender. However, at the same time, People's Education acknowledged the close relationship between the political reality and the school curriculum which meant a school curriculum that would be instrumental in establishing a *new political order and a new power structure*. In other words, a school curriculum that would – with the help of the teachers – be instrumental in inculcating the "new" democratic value system to which People's Education subscribed.

A People's Education curriculum was described as a curriculum in which knowledge would be "democratised" because it would be the result of democratic participation of a parent-teacher-pupil-state alliance. The implication was that, in the knowledge-producing process, no one group would have authority or supremacy over any other group; no one group's knowledge would be more important than any other group's knowledge; the needs of the individual would not be more important than the needs of the community; and, of great importance, knowledge would never be final but would be subject to reinterpretation in terms of the constantly changing social reality (due to an ongoing democratic dialogue between the different role players in the parent-teacher-pupil-state alliance). In this respect it is interesting to note that the following proposals are included in the White Paper on Education and Training in a Democratic South Africa (1995:56,61):

- The new system of education will be a single national system ...
- The Department of Education is empowered by the Constitution, either specifically, or by inference, to:
 - Establish norms and standards with respect to curriculum frameworks, standards, examinations and certification.

4.6 CONCLUSION

Underlying each of the three power struggles discussed in this chapter is a *conflict of values* which, consequently, has an effect on the extent

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of the "discrimination" perceived to be present in the legitimization of traditional boundaries in the social construction of identities. Hence, demands are aimed at *challenging the rules* by which "truth" is justified in the traditional school curriculum, in other words, demands are aimed at challenging the traditional "rules of power" (dependent upon and determined by the status of scientific knowledge) in Western-oriented societies.

In each case a cultural revolution is being enacted and, in spite of different accents in the specific objectives, similar *trends in the focus of demands* on the school curriculum can be identified. In the main, there is a rejection of traditional authority; there is a move

- from scientific certainty and objectivity to subjective meaning;
- from one truth (or culture) to many truths (or cultures);
- from elite (or expert) to everybody has a say, and
- from individualism to group solidarity.

These moves are towards a *new identity* and - although it may sometimes be denied by the specific group struggling for power - towards a new authority and a *new distribution of power* (albeit in terms of the "new" interpretation of democracy).

CHAPTER 5

THE STRUGGLE FOR POWER: ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The *larger context* in which *schools* exist, make them "part of a larger framework of institutions and values" (as well as of an envisaged balance of power in society) and therefore the focal point of "severe ideological differences" as to what the *content* of the curriculum should *aim* to accomplish in terms of the economic and environmental (ecological) well-being of mankind (Apple & Weis 1986:7).

On the *one* hand, there is a strong feeling that, if any country (South Africa as well) "is to move forward", one of the conditions that will have to be met "is the need for motivated and skilled citizens who will assume leadership positions in the private and public sectors" of the economy (Maseko 1994:13). The demand therefore is for a curriculum which will provide increased "education and training" for participation in, and contribution towards, a *strong national economy*.

On the *other* hand, and possibly "the most disturbing surprise of the late 20th century has been the discovery of the *frailty of the world's environment*" (The Guinness Encyclopedia 1990:300; italics added by this author). The dawning realisation that, "as the threat of a nuclear war recedes with the easing of tensions between the superpowers, the new battle is to protect the Earth's biological and natural systems from human exploitation" (The Guinness Encyclopedia 1990:300).

5.2 INFLUENCES ON THE DEMANDS FOR EDUCATION

5.2.1 HUMAN RIGHTS

In the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations 1948) the following articles were included (*cf* Chapter 4.2.1):

Art. 23: Everyone has the right to work ...

Art. 26: Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit (Togni 1994:50-51; Bishop 1989:1).

Research has shown that the emphasis on human rights has gradually shifted from concern with political and civil rights to concern with social and economic rights (Cranston 1973:74). This is indicative of the growing importance of the economy in defining the "identity" of human beings in the balance of power in society. Although civil and political rights - liberty and equality - are still basic to any declaration of human rights, these rights have increasingly been defined and interpreted in terms of social and economic rights. At the same time social and economic rights have been extended to include both security-oriented rights as well as environmental, cultural and developmental rights. Included, therefore, are those rights referred to as "group rights": both groups and individuals need to have their political, social and economic rights protected (Togni 1994:139): "the right to be ... free from state intrusion, social oppression, and economic and political exploitation" (Kelly 1994:69). Social oppression and economic exploitation (of both man and nature) as a way "to keep the powerful powerful and the powerless powerless" are perceived to be a violation of human rights (Kelly 1994:68). According to McQuoid-Mason (Togni 1994:138), human rights include the right of people to develop their cultural, political and economic potential in general, as well as the right of people to live in areas that are free from industrial and other pollution.

5.2.2 NEEDS AND INTERESTS

Demands on the school curriculum - also demands concerning the economy and ecology - are, to a large extent, influenced by changes in the perception of "needs" or "interests" (cf Chapter 3.2.1).

A "need" can be understood as "a social phenomenon" which emerges from the cultural - social, economic and political - environment. In other words, "needs" have their origins outside the educational system

as such but create "a whole range of social demands" regarding curricular knowledge (Ariosi & Frabboni 1983:97).

Generally speaking, individuals as well as groups "have few problems" in adapting their behaviour to changes in or demands on the school curriculum "if they can see profit in it"; if it is in their own "interest". "Profit" can be interpreted in more than one way. "It may mean something which supports their values or their power in the system, or which helps them to fulfil old or new personal [or group] goals" (Dalin 1978:35).

However, the demands stemming from both "needs" and "interests" require adaptations or changes to the school curriculum. There are two distinctive and opposite ways of looking at such adaptations or changes. On the *one* hand, the different interest groups that are involved focus on structural conditions for change and emphasise the use of power-coercive strategies for change. On the *other* hand, demands for change are related to a perception of perceived "needs" or "interests" in terms of an allotted or an envisaged place in an overall power structure (Dalin 1978:60).

5.2.3 CRITICAL DEMOCRACY

The aim of critical democracy is to focus the attention upon the prevailing interpretation of the concept of "democracy" (cf Chapter 4.2.3): in other words, to investigate the feasibility of the dominant criteria (or "expression of consent") for a democratic balance of power – or an "allotted place" – in a specific social reality. This means that, in Western-oriented industrial societies, opposing pressure groups have become critical of the school curriculum in terms of an interpretation of democracy dependent upon various aspects of the economy, for example, a sound national economy to which each person shall have equal access.

The concern of critical democracy is that a democratic "balance" should be maintained. This has focused attention on the fact that the "hunger for wealth" – "fed on the awareness that one's self-esteem depended on the results" (Huber quoted in Goodman 1989:95) – was having a profound effect on the "democratic" distribution of power in the

relationship between man and man, and between man and his environment.

5.2.4 THE OVERKILL SYNDROME

The meaning (The Concise Oxford Dictionary 1983:730) of "overkill" is given as the "amount by which (capacity for) destruction exceeds what is necessary for victory over or annihilation of the enemy" or "to obliterate with more nuclear force than required" (quoted in Clarke 1991:3).

The overkill instinct is usually triggered when the "democratic" balance of power is disrupted and there is too much power in the hands of one party; this usually happens in a situation in which one party has the advantage of superior knowledge and the other party is therefore in a relatively weak position. In 1945, for example, "too much" knowledge in the hands of one party gave rise to "too much" power and the result: more than 40 000 people were killed in Hiroshima by just one nuclear bomb. However, the overkill syndrome is also evident in situations in which the killer instinct of the dominant party is not switched off for a particular reason.

According to James Clarke (1991:4), in *Back to Earth*, the overkill instinct has had "profound effects on the story of man, on natural history and on the planetary environment". But, he goes on to say, it is not peculiar to humans. It is not unnatural either. A lion in the bush will stalk and kill one of its prey and then start eating. The lion has no desire to kill more than one. Presumably, the moment the survivors flee, the killer instinct of the lion is switched off because there is nothing left to stimulate it. However, if that same lion is put into a kraal, an effort will be made to kill all the cattle in the kraal. Simply because the cattle are unable to flee, the killer instinct of the lion is not switched off: the result is destruction of "more than enough".

When the first humans entered North America, whole groups of species of animals were wiped out by skilled plain hunters who had the advantage of superior knowledge which gave them too much power: the rifle which was the most advanced weapon of the day. In recent times

nearly all the extinctions have been island species because animals had nowhere to flee to. Such species fell victim to the overkill syndrome because they were put in a relatively weak position by the superior knowledge of man. At the same time man became part of the overkill syndrome because, although he had superior knowledge in one specific field, he did not have enough knowledge in other important fields.

Clarke (1991:5) argues, that, because "overkill has played such a central role in the history of man's handling of his environmental income and in his dealings with his animal contemporaries", it has to be "viewed as a force of considerable ecological significance". He furthermore points out that, although man's overkill instinct is not unnatural, its various manifestations have to be understood so that an imbalance of power can be recognised wherever it occurs. For example, that in the urban environment we are creating through our own endeavours, there is such a concentration of consumer goods that "our predatory instinct (our consumer desires) is being overstimulated" (Clarke 1991:5). In addition, the aim of all the carefully planned marketing strategies is to overstimulate this instinct – to indoctrinate man to crave "more than enough". Consequently man is "manipulated" to become a "consumer"; part of the race to have more than he needs; part of an economy largely dependent on the production of "more than enough"; part of the overkill syndrome; part of an imbalance of power (Clarke 1991:6).

5.3 THE ECONOMY AND THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM

5.3.1 INTRODUCTION

The *conflict* over the "nature and the strength of the alignment of the school with the economy" (Apple & Weis 1986:8) is closely related to the definition of *legitimate* knowledge: knowledge that will give individuals as well as countries access to the power structure in their social reality insofar as economic independence is a prerequisite for social power (Layton 1972:11).

Although the "nature of the curriculum ... is most often mandated by central government" (Shuttleworth 1993:5) many of the *demands* on the content of the curriculum – also the school curriculum in South Africa –

seem to be a *reflection* of certain trends (or changing interpretations of the *importance* of certain types of knowledge) in relation to the needs of the economy. This is mainly due to the fact that "business and industrial interests, because of their disproportionate influence on the political process, are often more able to encourage or retard change" (Shuttleworth 1993:5). Hence the influence of global events on the changing emphases in demands on school curricula serves to highlight, not only that the role of the economy in social and political stability has an impact worldwide, but also that the "shrinking world" profoundly affects the perceived economic needs of individuals and of countries and, finally, that economic demands on the school curriculum are part of a struggle for power (Carrim & Sayed 1992/93:23).

5.3.2 WHAT IS AN "ECONOMY"?

The economy of a country is concerned, in the first place, "with producing the many goods and services demanded by its population" (The Guinness Encyclopedia 1990:272). The "economy" of any country is, therefore, an amalgamation of complex and diverse industries - all part of an intricate business infrastructure varying from small private enterprises to powerful international companies - by which raw materials and products are made available to the final consumer or general population. It is on the *efficiency* of this infrastructure to generate *personal incomes* that the economy is dependent. Efficiency is associated with *mastery* (and the "relevant" curricular knowledge to attain this mastery); mastery, in turn, is associated with personal income dependent upon varying degrees of "*command over resources*" (Morris 1977:13).

The economic growth of a country - associated with the efficiency or success of an economy - is "usually measured by rates of increase of the national income. National income is, by definition, the sum of all the earned and unearned incomes in the economy" (Bishop 1989:21). The assumption is that the economy grows as individual earnings or purchasing power - to a large extent dependent upon *mastery* - grow. The implication of which is that people who earn more can buy more and have more social status and social power. Likewise, countries with greater purchasing power have more social status and social power.

The best-known ways in which to organise an economy (each of which upholds a distinctive balance of power) are the following:

- A centrally planned economy in which the state owns and controls most of the industries and resources.
- A private-enterprise economy in which individuals and firms own the means of production while the power of decision-making and the allocation of resources are determined by markets – the "interplay" of supply and demand.
- A mixed economy (found in most Western countries) in which both the above characteristics are evident. The extent to which either of the two is present in a specific economy varies substantially from one country to another and is dependent upon the political ideology of that particular country (The Guinness Encyclopedia 1990:276).

Since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution – which had initiated an extraordinary transformation of economic activities and of social relations – two distinct tendencies (or waves) in the history of Western-oriented economies can be discerned (Shuttleworth 1993:88). The *first wave* economies, mostly dependent upon large industries, are characterised by a balance of power determined by employment in these industries and a schooling system in which governments play an increasingly important role in the provision of mass education. In such economies the production process is broken down and the focus is upon the "sameness" of the final mass product. To a certain extent the latter is also true of *second wave* economies characterised by the decline of large industries, widespread unemployment, improved technology, global activity and a "shrinking world". In both first and second wave economies governments are responsible for the financial support of formal education as well as of large economic developments (Shuttleworth 1993:88–90). Gradually, however, a *third wave* economy is emerging. A distinctive feature of such a post-industrial economy is decentralisation (which is dependent upon, for example, entrepreneurial activities and high-tech knowledge and skills); a focus on the "wholeness" of the production process; and a focus on the diversity of the final product. Characteristic, too, is a striving towards a "more" democratic distribution of power and a schooling system controlled by a state/community alliance and partly dependent upon alternative sources of funding (Shuttleworth 1993:96).

Whatever the type of economy, there is widespread consensus in Western societies that the stability or efficiency as well as the growth of an economy, is, to a large extent, both determined by and dependent upon the quality of education and the subject matter taught in schools.

5.3.3 SOCIETY, EDUCATION AND THE ECONOMY

5.3.3.1 THE CHANGING ECONOMIC ORDER

The beginnings of universal mass education in the Western world had as its aim social objectives. Before and during the transition in the nineteenth century from a rural society to an industrial society, schooling was often seen as a means of social control; to be able to read was to gain access to the Bible and Christian norms.

An economy built on industrialisation brought in its wake a new social power structure in that it created greater material wealth for individuals as well as for nations. Towards the latter part of the nineteenth and the early twentieth century, as manufacturing processes became more complex, a great need for an educated workforce was created. In most industrialised countries this led, for the first time, to both state involvement in the provision of "universal" and compulsory education at the elementary level as well as to a strengthening of the economic aims of the schooling system. These aims became obvious when, for example, the introduction of the Elementary Education Act (1870) in England was accompanied by the following words: "Upon the speedy provision of elementary education depends our industrial prosperity" (W.E. Forster quoted in Baker 1994:11). Elementary education was seen as an essential prerequisite for the world of work and as a foundation for vocational training.

At the same time that the role of the government in the provision of education expanded, the economic aim gradually gained in importance. As Siraj-Blatchford (1993:3) so aptly puts it: "The history of state education ... and much of its development from its beginnings to the present have been motivated, measured and justified in terms of the nation's economic and productive progress. Reforms have generally

been based upon the expressed need to extend and improve provision for the masses" or the "emphasis upon the educational development of the nation's workforce" (Siraj-Blatchford 1993:3). Right up to the present time "the creation of an appropriately skilled workforce has been a paramount aim set for schools by governments" (Baker 1994:11). Even the more recent personal development view of education has come to be closely related with access to the world of work.

Since World War II pragmatic needs – such as socio-economic changes – have influenced the "basic concepts of the functions of school education" in Europe and the Western world substantially (Springer 1969:28). Educational reforms had, until that time, traditionally been based "upon notions of underachievement, identified initially in terms of the underachievement in the economy and subsequently of that of sections of the workforce" (Siraj-Blatchford 1993:3). The emphasis had been "on increasing the quantity or quality of knowledge and skills being transmitted, rather than on questioning the educational content and context themselves" (Siraj-Blatchford 1993:3).

However, since the 1960s "another large aim began to be loaded on to schools" worldwide. School curricula were increasingly "seen as *agents for social change*" (Baker 1994:12; italics added by this author) mainly because access to school knowledge gave access to the economy; and access to the economy had become synonymous with social mobility (and hence the "identity" of individuals and of nations). The result was that the economic aims, in terms of the knowledge content of the school curriculum, were becoming the pivotal point in debates about the "relevancy" of the school curriculum towards the world of work. Increasingly government *prescriptions* regarding reform of the school curriculum, were "economic – concerned with the manipulation of resources" (Simkens 1992:5). Increasingly, too, questions like "What are schools for?" were at the centre of conflicts about the knowledge content of the school curriculum. In England, for example, the carefully worded aim of the government White Paper, Better Schools (1985), was "to strengthen the emphasis given to the economic aims of education" (Baker 1994:14). In the hierarchy of "demands for the modern world", the economic demand was placed first: it was explicitly stated that "if young people were to be equipped for the twenty-first century ...

education at school should promote enterprise and adaptability in order to increase young people's chances of finding employment or creating it for themselves and others" (Baker 1994:14).

The change in emphasis in the school curriculum – that the economy was now the most important "interest" that had to be served by the school curriculum – paved the way for a new balance in the *ownership* (or control) of curricular knowledge. In terms of the new trends in the economy the 1985 White Paper recognised that parents, employers, taxpayers and ratepayers were all legitimate owners of schools: the wishes and economic priorities of all the joint owners were to be taken into account in the integration of "economic" knowledge into a "new" transformed school curriculum (Baker 1994:14; Simkens 1992:5).

This has given rise to much research on the relationship between the school curriculum and the economy. On the *one* hand, the focus has been on "structures of exploitation and domination outside it" (Apple & Weis 1986:21). On the *other* hand, the outcome of much research has been that there is a close relationship between a stable society and a sound economy. For example, it is stressed by Södersten (1990:180) that, because of the prevailing "social harmony ... built on a rapidly expanding economy ..., Sweden had become the most egalitarian of market economies" and an example of a stable and democratic socio-political reality. Hence "what is now accepted in many countries" striving towards a "more" democratic balance of social power, Bryan Phillips (1994:18) writes in an article in *DSA in depth*, "is that the needs of industry should be reflected far more closely in education and training provision than has been the case in English-speaking countries".

Economic demands on the curriculum in Western societies are ever increasing and echoed in these, according to Richard M. Cyert (1984:262) the president of the Carnegie-Melton University (1984), is the fact that the "virtual monopoly of ... knowledge" that the West has had in certain areas is being eroded by the "shrinking world". He goes on to say that if the West is to maintain its position in the balance of power and "succeed in international trade, we have to find a comparative advantage and our best chance is through the use of brainpower" as well as "relevant" curricular knowledge which will serve as a "life net" in the effort to survive as an economic force (Cyert 1984:263,264).

5.3.3.2 REACTION TO THE PREVAILING ECONOMIC ORDER

Currently, however, a tendency to criticise the economic *domination* of the school curriculum – especially for social reasons – has developed in certain circles. Ernest House (Dalín 1978:15), for example, has pointed out that, in a modern technocratic society, the economy and the *status quo* is maintained by constant innovation. This is in direct contrast to a traditional society in which the economy and the social *status quo* is maintained by the static nature of tradition and custom. Consequently modern economy is accused of using innovation – also when demanding changes to the economic bias of curricular knowledge – as "an excuse for maintaining the *status quo* in terms of power relationships" that are characterised by domination and discrimination (Dalín 1978:15). Hence, the increasingly "stronger emphasis on economic and vocational criteria" for the school curriculum has given rise to a clash of cultures.

Preparation for a specific role in the economy is, in many instances, interpreted as a conscious effort of *social control* by means of the school curriculum; as the integration of the majority of people into a specific and "oppressive" economic culture which serves to alienate and exploit both the human being and the environment (Baker 1994:14).

It has been argued that, because different people have different values, the aims stressed in the demands of the economy on the school curriculum may be seen by some as "basic" or intrinsic values arising from varying relationships with the culture, though by others as differences in social and economic interest (Dalín 1978:25–26). The argument is that the demands of the economy are self-defeating as well as enslaving and that economic efficiency is not all-important. There is opposition to the view that an efficient school curriculum is a curriculum that advances individual and national income; opposition to a curriculum which aims at tying "our identities" to "our vocational pursuits"; opposition to the fact that individuals "without qualifications are social casualties" (Emmerij 1974:149). It is pointed out that a student is not a "recipient of investment and output" and, therefore, should not be *dehumanised* by being regarded only in terms of money earned from the "asset" of "relevant" curricular knowledge; that, in

fact, a school curriculum has numerous functions, and to prepare the individual for a vocation is but one of them (Emmerij 1974:17,9).

In the eyes of adversaries the political goals – or the social control – implicit in the "economic" demands on the curriculum are seen to supersede the concern with personal well-being. Throughout the Western world and "often in reaction to the positivistic and technical orientation" in the so-called "achievement" tradition, economic demands on the school curriculum have been debated in terms of discrimination (Apple & Weis 1986:20). What is criticised, is the fact that the focus in "economic" demands has been on mastery and that, therefore, the school curriculum has served to reinforce the unequal distribution of power between different "classes" of people. It is stressed that, "while educational reform in many countries ... often contains significant ... economic elements, the prescriptions ... have been political ones ... The technical and economic dimensions ... [are] often designed to reinforce ... the pattern of power relations within them" (Simkens 1992:5).

According to critics it is, therefore, important that the school curriculum will allow for personal "human" development "without which the orientation to social and economic goals will continue to generate social discontent and individual frustration" (Emmerij 1974:149).

5.3.4 THE ECONOMY AND ACCENTS IN THE STRUGGLE FOR KNOWLEDGE POWER

5.3.4.1 THE ECONOMY AND KNOWLEDGE

The development of empirically-based science in the nineteenth century was the cornerstone of the shift from a rural to an industrial culture. A culture dependent mainly upon the modern view that, in Baconian terms, *science* – because it is *objective* and speculative – gives man *power* over nature: a culture in which the economy was to be the basis of social, economic and political power (White 1967:1204). Furthermore, as the success of industrialisation was dependent upon science and the "development of procedures, organizational patterns and physical operations that were based on technical expertise and scientific management" (Beyer 1988:61), the acquisition of knowledge became, not

an end, but a means for the "conquest of nature by man ... in order to further their own goals" (Knill 1992:28)

The main ideas of positivism, as a cultural consciousness (or ideological framework), were compatible with the new system on which the industrial economy was built. Fundamental to positivism is that there is a separation between body and mind. Because the mind is higher than the body, "objectivity", which is associated with the mind, has more *status* than "subjectivity", which is associated with the body (and with nature). Consequently the mind, being higher than the body and capable of objective knowledge, is outside nature and therefore able to identify phenomena and develop techniques with which to control nature (or the subjective) (Bowen 1981:554). The result was a growing faith in science as the only authority of true and verified knowledge (Beyer 1988:66). At the same time, however, the foundation was laid for the social acceptance of the compartmentalisation of, and *differentiation* between, bodies of knowledge that each had a different "status" according to whether it was associated with the mind or the body, with objectivity or subjectivity.

One of the contradictions that the economy has come up against is that, although industrialisation is dependent upon scientific knowledge, it is liberal or contemplative knowledge (associated with the mind and reason and the liberal arts) that has had status since the Middle Ages. Hence the economy is faced with the problem of breaking down the "accepted" division on which the difference in the status between liberal and applied knowledge is built. The struggle of the economy is to imbue scientific knowledge (hence practical or *useful* knowledge traditionally associated with the hands) with *importance*.

In time, although science "entered the curriculum because it represented useful knowledge" (Layton 1972:11), it has gained academic status and is therefore deemed "important" knowledge. Indeed such is the status of scientific knowledge in the school curriculum that it has surpassed the classics in determining *life chances*. As Layton (Goodson 1983:392) stated in 1973: "'Big science'... has become inextricably interwoven into the economic, political and ethical problems of the age.

Concomitantly ... the importance of scientific studies is recognized at all levels".

As a result scientific knowledge is not seen as useful knowledge in everyday life anymore, rather it is seen as "formal exercise" or academic knowledge. However, technology, which does not have the same status, is seen as "useful" knowledge only. Hence the interrelatedness of "useful" science and technology is not easily recognised (Layton 1972:11). Research shows that it is difficult to overturn the conflict of power evident in knowledge that is "academically-oriented" and knowledge that is "practice-oriented"; that it is not easy to instill the importance of "useful knowledge" as something of permanent good for all (Ariosi & Frabboni 1983:89). Apple (Goodson 1981:165) points out that, although the economy requires "high levels of technical knowledge to keep the economic apparatus running effectively", the "high status groups" in society "have tended to receive 'academic' rather than 'technical' knowledge" (Goodson 1981:165).

The ongoing struggle of the economy is a closer relationship – or a breaking down of the social distinction – between theoretical and practical knowledge (Dalín 1978:29). In terms of the power struggle it is imperative that practical knowledge, traditionally separated from the formal content of the curriculum, has to be "written down as valid knowledge warranting transmission and evaluation" mainly because practical knowledge is essential for the world of work (Apple 1987:407).

5.3.4.2 SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND EDUCATIONAL AIMS OF THE ECONOMY

In most Western cultures there is a firm belief that education is crucial in determining the subsequent life chances of any individual; that education affords an avenue for upward social mobility: a greater income which implies greater social power (Emmerij 1974:143). Hence the rationale behind one of the stated aims of including economic-oriented knowledge in the school curriculum is to diminish the disparity in the living conditions between the rich and the poor (Bishop 1989:1). This is such an important aim that "schools tend to describe themselves ... as meritocratic and as inexorably moving towards greater social and economic justice"; in other words, as instrumental in eliminating social disparity and giving access to the power structures in society (Apple &

Weis 1986:9). That is why researchers, like Ernest House (Dalín 1978:15), point out "that there is a hierarchical order among the institutions in society with economic structures as the dominant institution". The aim of the economy is to demand constant adaptations to curricular knowledge in order to break down "oppressive" distinctions in knowledge, thus enhancing social mobility and, by extension, a sound economy. Research, however, has shown that the school curriculum cannot effect social and economic change on its own.

Political aims – and power – are intricately linked to economic demands on the curriculum insofar as it is firmly believed that a stable economy is the cornerstone of a democratic (and hence stable) social and political society. This means "that the main political issues in any society are in a fundamental sense economic" (Wilson & Woock 1995:10). It is in this sense that the role of the government, especially in protecting the basic human *right* of all people to work, is perceived to be a major one in Western-oriented social realities. Generally the four most important objectives the government strives to attain in the economy are:

- full employment: unemployment has an effect on the total output of the economy and has detrimental social and political implications for the Western ideal of democracy;
- to avoid inflation: inflation creates problems for people with fixed incomes and lowers competitiveness in the international market;
- to promote economic growth: economic growth generates more money which leads to
 - a) a higher standard of living (hence more individual status), and
 - b) greater power for the nation in terms of world affairs;
- to avoid balance-of-payments deficits in the long term: this is necessary to maintain prestige in international trade and thus remain part of the international power structure (The Guinness Encyclopedia 1990:276).

The aim is a school curriculum that will provide the knowledge and skills necessary to maintain, and successfully equip each person for his or her active part, in a sound economy; a school curriculum that will be constantly "adapted" to create a literate, numerate and skilled workforce in terms of the changing demands of economies in Western-oriented societies – influenced, to a large extent, by the reinterpretation of knowledge perceived to be "important" for economic growth in a democratic

social reality. According to Bryan Phillips, (Manager of Human Resource Development at Gencor) (1994:17), the school curriculum should, in general, contribute "to both national unity and a healthy economy"; indeed, not only a healthy economy, but a "vibrant" and "competitive economy".

5.3.4.3 THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM: CRITICISM AND DEMANDS

5.3.4.3.1 INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

In all industrialised countries, including Britain and the United States of America, demands for the inclusion of more economic-oriented knowledge in the school curriculum align closely with the perceived economic (and political) situation of each such a country. Because of a growing perception that the economy is the most important determinant of a democratic balance of power in countries and in world affairs, the growing needs of the economy have given rise to serious efforts by governments to overcome the legacy of the earlier classic liberal arts curriculum with its bias towards "a classic and literary education rather than a scientific, technical and vocational education" (Baker 1994:11).

When - at the turn of this century - *Britain*, for example, began realising "that it was losing its industrial lead" in the world; that the economies of other European countries, especially that of Germany, was growing faster; that the basic and unmodernised industries in Britain were on the decline; and, most important, that the British economy was being jeopardised as a result of the failure to teach British children science and technology, the involvement of the state in the school curriculum increased and the creation of a "literate, numerate and skilled workforce became an important aim of schooling" (Baker 1994:7). In the 1950s and 1960s, however, the nineteenth century origin of "important" knowledge - a school curriculum with an academic and literary bias - was still very much in evidence in secondary education in Britain as well as in most of the Western world (Emmerij 1974:43).

During the 1970s there was a major wave of criticism and demands on the school, when, in reaction to the severe economic crisis throughout the Western world, the perception was strengthened that only drastic measures would save the economy and restore the profitability of Western societies. In 1976 the British Prime Minister, James Callaghan

(Apple 1987:408), blamed the education system "for failing to establish a functional relationship between schools and industry that served the manpower and productivity needs of the economy". Callaghan (Baker 1994:30) stated that, in the "view of many employers and industrialists", the "new recruits from school did not have the 'basic tools' required for work". Callaghan sparked off what came to be known as the "Great Debate", "new vocationalism", or, as Ian Jamieson (Apple 1987:408) has called it, the British "schools-industry" movement. This comprised "a diverse collection of state, educational and employer groupings who all sought to put pressure on the education system to change the content of what was taught and how it was taught and to make education more sensitive to employer's needs" (Kraak 1991:408). In 1982 the aspirations of this movement were summed up by the Secretary of State for Education at the time, Sir Keith Joseph (Apple 1987:408), who said that "schools and businesses need to understand each other better"; and, that pupils have to be helped to understand both "how industry and commerce are organised" as well as "the relationship between producers and consumers". One of the great issues addressed by the Great Debate was therefore the overemphasis of the "importance" of "academic knowledge" (in defining the status of people) and the consequent neglect of vocational concerns in the school curriculum. Callaghan (Baker 1994:30) demanded "a greater technological bias in scientific teaching" as well as a greater bias towards "practical applications in industry" rather than the existing academic bias. Moreover, the lack of discipline in schools was blamed for the negative attitudes towards work in general and factory authorities in particular (Kraak 1991:409).

It is argued (Kraak 1991:410) that the broad formal curriculum in British schools was challenged (in the Great Debate) in what basically amounted to an ideological intervention; that the focus of demands in the struggle for power was not an attempt "to provide a balanced understanding of society ... or autonomous judgement", but rather a narrowing of "the learning experience" in "an attempt by employers and the state to alter the content of the curriculum in favour of employer-led definitions of reality" (Kraak 1991:410). Robert Moore (Kraak 1991:212) points out that these demands were driven by an ideological imperative to "block a coherent social and political understanding of the world of work". Arguments to the effect that new technologies were needed in the

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modern economy, and that the "computer-automated manufacture and modern information technologies" required a "more technically informed and skilled work force", gave credibility to demands for *relevancy* – for more vocational education and less attention to an academic curriculum (Kraak 1991:412). The culmination of The Great Debate came when the 1988 Education Reform Act ("signalling the greatest revolution" in the power over the British school curriculum "since the Education Act of 1944") was implemented by Kenneth Baker, the Education Secretary, at revolutionary speed. Initiated and imposed from the outside, power was transferred from the local education authorities and from teachers to central government and the parents (Burchell & Milman 1990:122).

The focus of the demands for an economy-oriented school curriculum – stemming from the crisis of confidence in schools in England which was "shared in varying measures, primarily [by] local and national politicians, but also ... [by] employers and pressure groups" (Baker 1994:17) – was symptomatic of the growing fears in Western-oriented societies that the existing school curriculum was unable to assist in building an increasingly competitive economy (that was perceived to be vital for access to the international power structure).

During the 1980s state governments and local authorities in the *United States of America* began to realise that to "attract new sources of employment, and retain existing jobs, a new support infrastructure should be created"; that, to be competitive in the world economy, the difference in status between academic and practical knowledge would have to be eliminated. The demand was for a school curriculum that would make provision for "the availability of a skilled workforce, ... up-to-date technology, and modern telecommunications": a school curriculum with a bias towards practical and not academic knowledge. It was seen as the "new role for state government ... to ensure [that] these resources were available to maximise competitive capacities" (Shuttleworth 1993:88).

The main focus in economic demands on the school curriculum was, therefore, on "standards" or "excellence" and the reason, according to the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy (*A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century* 1986) (Beyer 1988:27–28), was that:

America's ability to compete in world markets is eroding. The productivity growth of our competitors outdistances our own ...

The demand was for "an improved supply of young people with the knowledge, the spirit, the stamina and the skills to make the nation once again fully competitive". Schools had to become "the engines of progress, productivity and prosperity" (quoted in Beyer 1988:28) and the school curriculum the vehicle for "social prosperity, economic productivity" and "competitiveness" (Beyer 1988:28). In these pressures on the school curriculum, as Landon Beyer (1988:30) points out, "the equivocation between business interests and educational excellence is here starkly and bluntly put".

Because the increasingly complex economy "requires high levels of technical" and administrative knowledge "for the expansion of markets", and to "increase profit margins", the demand was for a school curriculum that would put less emphasis on the academic curriculum and rather make available the important "technically utilizable knowledge on which so much of our science-based industries depend and on which the culture of industry is based" (Apple & Weis 1986:10). The school curriculum had to make provision for practical "math[s], science, and problem-solving training" so that students would be able to become the inventors of "miracles", if America was to survive in a global economy largely dependent upon America's ability to offer the world "successive generations of better and better technology" (Cromer 1984:3). Hence, in terms of the power struggle, weight was given to these demands for *relevant knowledge* by reasoning that "if our schools don't start looking ahead, they - and we [the USA] - will be left behind" (Cromer 1984:39).

In the past decade a growing perception of the importance of community needs in preserving a democratic balance of power gave rise to a growing conviction that it was of "vital importance" for the school curriculum to be "relevant" to the workplace - in other words, that the knowledge content of the school curriculum had to be adapted to the ever-changing and ever-increasing demands of the workplace. The result of this, according to Shuttleworth (1993:23), is that "public education has become increasingly subject to external influences, particularly to the interest and involvement of employers", hence demands for more practical knowledge and less emphasis on academic knowledge have given rise to new and changing patterns in the control of the school curriculum. One such pattern is the *education and business rela-*

tionships. In order to justify the demand for the involvement of employers in partnerships that will put them in control of (at least) part of the school curriculum, two of the reasons given are the following:

- * the concern of employers – mainly in the light of global economic challenges – about the prevailing skill levels of employees (Shuttleworth 1993:23); and
- * the conviction that "pooling resources" and jointly designing education programmes and school curricula will "result in success for both partners" (Cromer 1984:20).

The well-known American educationalist, Kenneth B Hoyt (Shuttleworth 1993:30), however, points out that such education and business relationships can be divided into two distinct groups. On the *one* hand, there are *co-operative partnerships* that imply a willingness to solve the problems of education. On the *other* hand, there are the *collaborative partnerships* that present two "problems", which may have an influence on the power of each partner to control the school curriculum.

- The "problem" of "convincing" the education system to share its "authority" for making decisions (this is a tough problem).
- The "problem" of "convincing" the business community to accept appropriate shares of the "responsibility" and "accountability" for the success or failure of the school curriculum and the total educational effort (Shuttleworth 1993:30).

A "new phase" in the economic reality, "away from the mass production mass employment and dependency upon national distribution "that was a characteristic feature" of the economies in traditional industrialisation, is evident in most Western-oriented countries at present (Young 1993:33). The struggle for knowledge power is, therefore, reflected in demands on the school curriculum to make provision for skills, information and attitudes necessary to survive in the transition to a new economic age (Shuttleworth 1993:152). The emerging entrepreneurial-oriented economy needs workers that are scientifically and technologically literate. Consequently, the existing school curriculum is criticised because it is *not relevant*: does not "provide a real world context" for an economy dependent upon private enterprise; does not equip workers (citizens) to create their own "job opportunities" (Yager 1991:424); and, does not include practical science, technology and engineering as a basis for community enterprise and local employment

that will stimulate global competitiveness. Hence already evident in schools is the introduction of personal computers as teaching aids into the curriculum. The rationale behind this is that, in terms of the focus of demands in the struggle for economic power, computer literacy is regarded as an imperative (Shuttleworth 1993:167); as the only way to supply the "new groups of jobs" with "new knowledge and skills in which the old separation of occupationally specific vocational preparation and insulated academic studies will have no place" (Young 1993:34).

5.3.4.3.2 SOUTH AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

In general, the "economic determinants" of the Western cultural ideal of democracy, evident in the focus of demands to restructure the education-work relationship in South Africa, have, one after the other, been influenced by the same general trends as in most other Western-oriented economic realities (Kraak 1991:413).

During 1980 the government of the time commissioned an investigation into a feasible education policy in order to "promote the economic growth" and "improve the quality of life of all the inhabitants", while specifically giving attention to the question of how to "provide for the manpower requirements of the RSA" (HSRC 1981:1). In the recommendations following this investigation (also known as the De Lange Report), it was pointed out that South Africa was being left behind in the current technological revolution mainly because of the academic bias of the school curriculum (HSRC 1981:21); that the implementation of technology in school curricula at all levels "can and should play an extremely important role in meeting the manpower needs of the RSA irrespective of the level of training required" (HSRC 1981:35). Also the 1986 the Project Free Enterprise Report (involving almost 900 employers throughout South Africa) concluded that the shortage of technical and practical skill in South Africa was the result of an academically-biased school curriculum (Kraak 1989:29); that, to further democracy and provide the South African economy with the much needed expertise, it was imperative to implement a technology-biased school curriculum (Kraak 1991:415).

The 1989 Constitutional Guidelines for a Democratic South Africa, stated that a "new" South Africa needed practical knowledge, not for a few,

but for the majority of the population; that it was the fundamental right of "all sections of the population, especially the blacks" that curricular knowledge would make provision for "the acquisition of management, technical and scientific skills" (Moulder 1991:28,25). The focus of demands in the struggle for power was on, for example, a "calculator-based mathematics curriculum" that would teach children how to use a calculator, would provide the individual with skills for *economic mobility* and the national economy with the much needed manpower for a *sound economy* (Moulder 1991:103-104). The importance of the economy as the determinant of the democratic ideal was also prominent in the findings of the National Education Policy Investigation. In the subsequent Report (NEPI 1993:154) it was emphatically stated that a sound economy in the "new" South Africa would be of paramount importance in "meeting the twin challenges of restoring economic growth and improving income distribution in the South African economy" in the demand to establish a democratic social reality. Fundamental to most demands on the school curriculum was the perception that the mainly academic South African school curriculum had failed "to build the educated human resource base necessary for economic development" as a prerequisite for "an equitable and democratic society" (NEPI 1993:139). The main focus in demands for an "economy-oriented" school curriculum was on the redistribution of power; on changing the balance of power between powerful economic interest groups and the wider society; on breaking down the distinction between academic and practical knowledge (NEPI 1993:154).

In the struggle for economic power it is important to note that demands of all pressure groups – government, employers and the private sector – focus upon an interest in the domain of *ownership* (or control) of the economic-oriented knowledge to be included in the school curriculum. One of the given reasons is that "educational institutions are too slow in reacting to market tendencies" (Welgemoed 1994:5). Fanie du Toit (1994:19) – of Education, Joint Ventures, Absa Bank – is even more vehement when he argues that, because there is a "dire need" for the reconstruction of the school curriculum that would equip each person for his or her active role in a sound economy upon which the future of the "new" South Africa is dependent, "the private sector has not only the right but also the obligation" to contribute towards the reconstruction of the school curriculum which "should take place in co-operation

with other stake-holders, including government, educational institutions, trade unions and other formations of civil society" (Du Toit 1994:19).

The February 1995 government White Paper on Education and Training in a Democratic South Africa (1995:10) states that "measured by international indicators of human development and economic competitiveness, South Africa's overall performance is poor"; that, because of the "gross inequalities in educational attainment, skills, employment opportunity, productivity and income" in the industrial economy, the aim of the Government (in terms of the "transformative mission" to "open the doors of learning and culture to all") is to implement a school curriculum that will include the "*appropriate mathematics, science and technology*" which are crucial to "economic advancement" (White Paper 1995:10,8,18). Owing to the fact that "a rigid division between 'academic' and 'applied', 'theory' and 'practice', 'knowledge' and 'skills', 'head' and 'hand'" is associated with the past, with "economic opportunity and power" in the "old" South Africa, it was stated that "successful modern economies" require citizens "to adapt to and develop new knowledge, skills and technologies" and to work "co-operatively" (White Paper 1995:4). A further important accent in the struggle for economic efficiency was touched upon by the deputy minister of Education, Mr Renier Schoeman, when he said in the Senate on 8 June 1995 that - as a prerequisite for a democratic social reality - the focus in the school curriculum will have to be on quality education in order to drive the engine of the economy ("dryf enjin van ekonomie") (*Die Burger* 1995a:11).

Therefore, also in the democratic ideal of the "new" South Africa, demands in the struggle for economic (and hence knowledge) power focus on changing the academic bias of the curriculum towards *relevancy* in terms of "a changing technological, social and economic environment" while, at the same time, giving attention to the "manpower crisis", widespread "economic illiteracy", equality of opportunity and "maximising the efficiency of resource use in education" (Phillips 1994:17).

5.3.5 SUMMARY

On the whole, governments (and, increasingly pressure groups within the economy) accept that the school curriculum has to provide the *relevant* skills and knowledge needed in the changing economic reality. Consequently the *interaction* and *interdependency* "between

educational systems and society at large" is *reflected* in demands on the school curriculum and justified by claims that relevant economic knowledge will be instrumental in achieving a "more" democratic balance of power – in terms of both economic and political aims (Dalin 1978:14).

In most Western societies it is firmly believed that education, insofar as it is related to the economy, is crucial in determining the *social power* of individuals as well as that of nations. Hence there is a very definite *relationship* between the social and political reality on the *one* hand, and the economic demands made on the school curriculum on the *other* hand: in other words, changing emphases in the *status of knowledge* in terms of the socio-economic reality, are, in time, reflected in the school curriculum.

Demands for the inclusion of curricular knowledge relevant to the economy are, therefore, a widespread phenomenon in which the *main trend* seems to be largely aimed at *transforming* the *bias* in school curricula away from "academic" knowledge and towards "useful" knowledge – mainly in terms of its role in generating personal income.

5.4 THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM

5.4.1 INTRODUCTION

As we near the turn of the twentieth century there are signs that, owing to the enormous *environmental threats* facing the world, perceptions about the aim of the school curriculum are undergoing significant changes. Consequently, the influence of attempts to enhance widespread environmental awareness is *reflected* in a major shift in the focus of *demands* on the school curriculum (and on the economy). According to Cock (Du Plessis 1993:24) the new environmental issues are "deeply political in the sense that they are embedded in access to power and resources in society". Nevertheless, history has proved that public opinion will, to a large extent, act as the determinant of whether economic growth or a healthy environment will be put first in economic as well as in educational planning (The Guinness Encyclopedia 1990:301).

In an Editorial in *Conserva* it is stressed that "threatening environmental problems, such as the ozone layer and atmospheric pollution, the greenhouse effect, water pollution, in short degradation of the natural

and man-made environment, cannot simply be postponed for eventual caring. *It should be anticipated and prevented* – a responsibility dealt with now ... After all, to pay heed to environmental" issues is to pay heed to man's "survival ... which depends on natural resources" (Conserva 1989:2; italics added by this author). It is in this respect that the role of the curriculum is perceived to be important; especially in an attempt to cultivate an *ecological perspective* as a prerequisite for a *space for freedom* which is closely related to a healthy environment (and a "new" democratic balance of power) (Van der Merwe 1987:9).

5.4.2 THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS IN SOCIO-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

5.4.2.1 WHAT IS ECOLOGY?

Ecology, a term used to define the study of the relations between organisms and their environment (*i.e.* the external and internal conditions affecting their existence, growth and welfare), was coined by a German zoologist, Ernest Haeckel (1834–1919), in 1869. He used the German *Ökologie* derived from the Greek *oikos* meaning home, household or place to live in (Science Encyclopedia 1994:369).

There are three main eco-systems on earth – deserts, grasslands and forests – and two water eco-systems – marine (salt water) and freshwater (rivers and lakes) (The Guinness Encyclopedia 1990:105,178). Each of these support a complex pattern of interrelated and interdependent organisms. The survival of each of these organisms is dependent upon a delicate balance in the eco-system in which it exists. It is *important* to know that, *firstly*, the survival of mankind is dependent upon a healthy balance in the eco-system; *secondly*, that external stimuli such as light and heat can have an effect on the balance in the eco-system; and, *thirdly*, that it is increasingly being recognised that many socio-cultural problems are basically of ecological origin (The Collier's Encyclopedia (8) 1966:516). Ecology, which embraces all of the earth and mankind, can no longer be seen as *out there*, available to be exploited for (personal) material gain (Bowen 1981:554).

5.4.2.2 MAN'S "PLACE" IN THE ENVIRONMENT

Environment is "essentially a statement of the environmental" or natural conditions under which human beings, animals or plants live and have

to survive (The Collier's Encyclopedia (8) 1966:516). What is important is that *nature as a resource for survival is not unlimited*. Disturbing or disrupting the environment (or natural surroundings) may have far-reaching or even dangerous implications for the survival of mankind.

Fundamental to the prevailing Western cultural ideal is that man has a primary place in the universe; that mankind is superior to the natural environment and is free to use natural resources to satisfy his own needs. Within the value system that exists in Western societies, nature is perceived as inferior to man and without intrinsic worth. Hence, according to Knill (1992:27), the environment has become a commodity and is seen as a "collection of resources for human exploitation". Because of the "shrinking world" (or the move towards a "global village") it has become possible to use the "entire planet" as a resource base. The implication is that, if the resource base is overstressed, "the entire planetary system" is overstressed (Knill 1992:26).

5.4.2.3 THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS: THE ENVIRONMENT AS A RESOURCE BASE FOR MATERIAL GAIN

One way of looking at the causes of the current ecological crisis is to focus on the many unintended, and even unwanted, effects of industrialisation in the Western world. The Industrial Revolution – mainly on account of the great material gain for individuals as well as for countries – proved to be a *major force* in the transformation of the traditional power structure. Gradually *social power* was measured in terms of the degree to which expert (scientific) knowledge gave power over nature; the degree to which it was possible to *use* scientific knowledge in order to *control* nature for personal material gain. As a result *mastery*, or the exploitation of nature, was associated with the attainment of a "democratic" social reality. The perception was that economic independence would be instrumental in achieving the *democratic ideals* of equality and freedom from social oppression.

Hence, in her well-known article "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis", Lynn White (1967:1204) comes to the conclusion that:

Our ecologic crisis is the product of an emerging, entirely novel, democratic culture. The issue is whether a democratized world can

survive its own implications. Presumably we cannot unless we *rethink our axioms* (italics added by this author).

Rethinking the "axioms" implies reconsidering the assumptions underlying the focus of demands for the inclusion of modern technology and science in the school curriculum.

White (1967:1203) argues that the ecological crisis has its roots in the democratic process initiated in the Middle Ages. Natural science, as "the effort to understand the nature of things", was a well-known activity for many ages and among many peoples. Then, in the nineteenth century, what amounted to "a marriage" between science and technology (or a union between theory and practice) sparked off the belief that – in Baconian terms – "scientific knowledge means technological power over nature". White stresses emphatically that the acceptance, as a normal pattern of action, that scientific knowledge is equal to technological power over nature, "may mark the greatest event in human history since the invention of agriculture, and perhaps in nonhuman terrestrial history as well". In 1873 the word "ecology" first appeared in the English language. One century later the impact of humankind – in search of economic independence and social power – has increased to such an extent that concern for the problem of an *ecological backlash* is escalating rapidly.

According to Johan Hattingh (1993:2) it is not uncommon to blame the ecological crisis, *firstly*, on the "un-natural" consumer-oriented society we live in and, *secondly*, on the "un-natural" way in which science and technology have been implemented by industry to meet the basic and less basic "needs" of consumers. The reason is that in the consumer-oriented society the economy (based on the quest for personal material gain) is becoming increasingly dependent upon a culture of *more than enough* (which implies continuous efforts to capitalise on the "un-natural" mastery of nature).

However, in agreement with White, Hattingh (1993:3) argues that it was the process of democratisation – in society and in scientific studies – that paved the way for a higher standard of living (higher productivity, higher consumption) in the short term, and the ecological crisis (over-exploitation of natural resources) in the long term. He is

convinced that the ecological crisis and the democratic processes of the past two centuries are two sides of the same coin. He suggests that the only successful way to overcome the ecological crisis will be to effect a breach in the analogy that has developed between the concept of democracy and a consumer-driven morality. The challenge that will have to be met is one of how to establish a new culture (and a new balance of power) in which the values of equity, efficiency and sustainability will be evenly balanced. Such a new culture will have to be one in which the *power* of, for example, *expert scientific and technological knowledge* will be used to highlight a completely *new dimension* in the relationship between man and nature as a resource base: nature as fragile and limited. Hattingh (1993:5) argues that, in fact, "our ecological survival *depends* on the emergence of an entirely novel, democratic culture. The issue is whether a truly democratized world would allow its self-destruction through the actions of a consumerist elite" (italics added by this author).

5.4.3 SOCIETY, EDUCATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

Although critics have been expressing concern that modern economy uses constant innovation as "an excuse" for maintaining the oppressive balance of power in the *status quo*, it was only recently that the difficulties and unintended effects of "rapid technological change" have captured the attention of society at large and education in particular (Dalin 1978:15).

Consequently, the trend towards an ecological perspective, which "has developed with strong support across traditional interest groups" (Dalin 1978:15) over the last forty years, has focused on some of the unwanted effects of the rapid economic growth in most Western societies. These have been:

- damage to the environment;
- uncontrolled urbanisation and the growth of the "consumer" society; and,
- the (often) widening gap between the "have's" and the "have-not's".

Because social mobility has become dependent largely upon a school curriculum "relevant" to the world of work, critics point out that the existing school curriculum has been instrumental in enhancing these unwanted effects. For example, "individual social mobility is facilitated

by education without regard for the community left behind", without understanding how social mobility – economic welfare – may affect the environment and the well-being of future generations (Dalin 1978:16).

However, as "our attitude towards the environment is profoundly influenced by the values prevailing in our society", culture, for a long time, "has been masculine, aggressive and domineering in its outlook" (Jordaan 1994:5). The traditional accent in the existing school curriculum is therefore on certain "important" bodies of knowledge – mostly related to the economy insofar as it is perceived to be a prerequisite for social mobility in terms of the Western ideal of democratic social relations. The implication of this is clearly a question of conflicting paradigms: "important knowledge" is seen in terms of conflicting values arising from varying relationships to the same cultural heritage (Dalin 1978:25). Inherent in such a power crisis is the fact that society and the school curriculum are subjected to profound perceptual changes. Under the influence of changes of similar magnitude (albeit of a different nature) to those which occurred during the Industrial Revolution in the previous two centuries, there are signs that perceptions about "important" knowledge are changing. There is "a shift of emphasis away from means towards ends"; from "economic growth towards human development"; from "quantitative to qualitative values and goals"; from "the impersonal ... towards the personal and interpersonal"; and from the "earning and spending of money towards the meeting of real human needs and aspirations" (Robertson 1986:xx).

Underlying the growing environmental awareness, therefore, is a gradual change in the *social consciousness*. Accordingly, the move is towards a culture in which democracy is interpreted in terms of the multi-cultural richness and interdependency of humankind and environment. Universal acceptance of humankind's exploiting "the rest of nature as if from above and outside it" is giving way to an emerging ecological world view, in which it is recognised that "survival and self-realization alike require us to act as what we really are – integral parts of an ecosystem much larger, more complex and more powerful than ourselves".

Evidence of the changing social consciousness is provided by countless initiatives in many countries. Some of these are "the feminist movement, *the environmental movement*, ... and the pressures now building up for

a fundamental change in the organization and purposes of work in the post-industrial age" (Robertson 1986:xx; italics added by this author). Even government proposals reveal a gradual shift towards an ecological perspective. In the White Paper on Education and Training in a Democratic South Africa (1995:18), for example, one of the stated aims of education is to "create environmentally literate and active citizens and ensure that all South Africans, present and future, enjoy a decent quality of life through the sustainable use of resources".

While there is evidence of worldwide efforts to involve schools in environmental awareness programmes like a special World Environment Day (5 June), various researchers, including Goodson (1983:393; italics added by this author), have noticed "the *emergence* of the environment as an influential ideal and area of concern, and of environmental education as a viable curriculum possibility". Moreover, specially appointed investigation groups for the implementation of environmental education in schools, as well as social and political pressure groups like the Green movement, are all actively promoting environmental awareness in an effort to eliminate the social oppression perceived to be evident in the traditional balance of power in Western-oriented social realities.

5.4.4 THE GREEN MOVEMENT

The most important assumption underlying Green politics is described by Kelly (1994:23) as follows: "We in the Greens say that we have borrowed the Earth from our children. Green politics is about having just 'enough' and not 'more'", about the fundamental *human right* of mankind to survive in areas that are free from industrial and other pollution.

Although the world has woken up to the environmental threats facing it, and there is wide acceptance of environmental threats as a serious problem, this is only the start to cultivating a new social consciousness: a perception that the environment is "important" and, likewise, knowledge about the environment. For, as Nisbet (Goodson 1983:393) pointed out in 1969, there is a vital distinction between readjustment – the effects of which "are never sufficient to alter the structure" of a society – and the "more fundamental ... change of structure, type, pattern or paradigm" which is a prerequisite for fundamental changes in the bias of "economic" demands on the school curriculum.

However, since the German "Green" party (*die Grünen*) has managed to win political seats in the government (1983), "Green" politics have become a *major* force in modern societies. Because West Germany was a highly developed and prosperous industrialised society the problems addressed by the German Greens were similar to those experienced in other countries with an industry-based economy (Robertson 1986:xv).

The so-called Green movements worldwide, including both political and social awareness groups, have mixed and varied aims, yet in general the professed purpose of all of them is to cultivate environmental awareness, to promote a new holistic value system, and a new world view so that society will be prepared to acknowledge a new balance of power and accept a school curriculum in which the intrinsic worth of the environment will be high on the priority list (Jordaan 1994:1-7). Although there is no single theoretical approach to Green issues, and although different movements stress different aspects of the ecological crisis, they are all part of a larger Green consciousness in terms of which the human element is simply one part of a complex ecological system (Knill 1992:35). There are five main approaches to redressing the perceived imbalance of power that has given rise to the ecological crisis – four with and one without a social component. Each one of these is concerned about a school curriculum that reflects the domination of man over nature.

Deep ecology is interested in the wilderness and stresses "notions such as a sense of place, opposition to industrial society", and the importance of self-realisation insofar as the exploitation of nature threatens "the place" of the human being (Knill 1992:35). The concern of deep ecology is with the powerlessness of nature in a mechanistic and materialistic industrial society and with a power structure in which scientific knowledge gives man power over nature (Du Plessis 1993:27).

The central concern and guiding principle of the *visionary/holistic Greens* is the evolution of a new society in which ways of thinking will be based on the interconnected nature of all phenomena. Underlying the "new" democratic ideal is that people will move beyond "the mechanistic world view that has dominated Western thinking for the past three hundred years to a fuller understanding of the subtle relationships and dynamic flux that comprise life on Earth" (Spretnak & Capra 1986:3).

A small group of *Marxist-oriented Greens* – who have entered the Green party from various communist groups – are often criticised by fellow Marxists as "too ecologically-oriented at the expense of class struggle and unqualified economic growth" (Spretnak & Capra 1986:5).

Eco-feminism argues that the male-centredness in scientific knowledge is the real issue; that male attributes such as domination and aggression have been instrumental in conquering nature. However, now that nature is conquered the imbalance in the relationship between mankind and nature could be improved if feminine attributes are granted status in scientific knowledge (Knill 1992:36).

The *Gaia* approach is different to the foregoing in that – having been developed in the realm of the natural sciences – it does not have a social component. According to the Gaia approach the Earth is a self-regulating system in which man is an important component, though not the centre of the system (Knill 1992:36).

Fundamental to all these movements is an agreement that the real cause of the ecological crisis is the *inappropriate human-nature relationship* – an imbalance in the relations of power between mankind and nature based upon the assumption that the possession of "superior" knowledge gives man power over nature – and that a solution is not possible without changing the bias in curricular knowledge into one that is in harmony with the ecological perspective. The implication of this is a fundamental change in the social consciousness and a "new" interpretation of democracy which will not be possible without profound changes in perceptions about the power of knowledge.

5.4.5 THE ENVIRONMENT AND ACCENTS IN THE STRUGGLE FOR KNOWLEDGE POWER

5.4.5.1 THE GREEN MOVEMENT AND KNOWLEDGE

Bacon was the first to point out that scientific knowledge was not "a contemplation of reality; it was a struggle for power and mastery" of nature (Knill 1992:28). The Green movement maintains that this view of scientific knowledge supports the distinction between human and environment upon which Western industrialisation was built (Knill 1992:28).

Greens furthermore point out that this same distinction is evident in the "oppressive" balance of power inherent in positivism; and that, because the environmental crisis has focused the attention on the fact that "all future human endeavours are constrained by the delicate balance of the world ecosystem", adherence to the positivist tradition will have to be reconsidered or replaced (Bowen 1981:553). It is, therefore, imperative to break down the basic dualism in positivism (*cf* Chapter 2.3.3.3.2) – fundamental to which is the assumption that (because the mind is outside nature therefore superior and capable of objectivity) it is acceptable to use "objective" scientific knowledge to control the "subjective" nature. What is important, is that nature "contains mankind; we are within nature, totally" (Bowen 1981:554). In other words, scientific knowledge (or knowledge of the parts) is not more important than subjective knowledge (or knowledge of the "whole"). Consequently, both the "superiority" and the "objectivity" (hence the perceived power) of scientific knowledge is being questioned by the Green movement.

In terms of Green consciousness, it is recognised that eco-conscious science is science that "is now moving towards the position of 'social empiricism'". The emphasis in eco-conscious science is not on "separate parts", or divisions, but on the "wholeness" of the universe. While eco-conscious science accepts that "we know through our senses", it points to "the subjectivity of such knowledge". Underlying the assumption that science is *socially constructed* is the perception that, because scientific knowledge is "an integral part of our assessment of situations and our decisions to act", we "can never clear our minds of previous concepts and discover the 'pure facts'" (Bowen 1981:554).

The argument, however, is not "against science or technology per se" but against the conviction that "empiric-analytic science", with its focus on mastery and domination, "is the only way of knowing"; against the optimism that scientific knowledge and technology would be instrumental in solving all the social, economic and political problems confronting Western societies (Eckersley 1992:51). Hence, the emphasis in Green thought is not on the uniqueness of some bodies of knowledge, but on the social construction, the *interrelatedness*, the importance – and the power – of all knowledge (Eckersley 1992:5 ;).

5.4.5.2 THE GREEN PROTEST

The dream of modernism – expanding horizons and the autonomy and self-determinism of man because of his having power over nature by virtue of his possession of objective scientific knowledge – has come up against the reality of limited natural resources (Hattingh 1993:5).

Hence underlying the Green protest in general, is the assumption that "*if there is to be a future, it will be Green*" (Kelly 1994:121; italics added by this author). It is emphatically stated by Kelly (1994:38) that the "Green vision of a just society" is one in which curricular knowledge will make a significant contribution towards ensuring that "economic, social, and individual rights are guaranteed and protected, and everyone is free from exploitation, violence, and oppression". Basic to the "liberation of nature" is that school knowledge of the non-human world will have to be liberated from "the status of human resource, human product, human caricature" (Rudman quoted in Eckersley 1992:58).

The Greens argue that the school curriculum is enmeshed in the dominant Western cultural ideal in which man is more important than nature. When viewing the world from a "*truly green perspective*", it becomes evident that, although economists or politicians might have different views on spending wealth, they all have the same basic approach in creating it: "by ruthless exploitation of the natural world to the point of destruction. In other words more traditional growth every year" (Icke 1990:10–11). On the *one* hand, economists and governments, "obsessed with building economies based on unlimited growth", are struggling to implement a school curriculum more closely aligned to a competitive economy. On the *other* hand, industry is dumping toxic waste "somewhere else, rather than neutralizing them, without caring that in an ecosystem there is no 'somewhere else'" (Robertson 1986:xv). It is argued that a solution will only be possible once the school curriculum offers "relevant" knowledge that will help to transform the structure of "the web" (*i.e.* the traditional power structure) that modern industrialised societies are entangled in (Hattingh 1993:3).

Of concern to the Green protest is that the focus in the prevailing "economic" demands on the school curriculum is upon the "relative

merits of short-term technological and economic 'fixes'" and not upon the realisation that the "major problems of our time are simply different facets of a single crisis": the finite environment (Robertson 1986:xvi; Eckersley 1992:14). It is argued (Knill 1992:202) that the phrase "consumer society" is so common that "its implications" to the school curriculum are seldom recognised. For most people it is "normal" that a school curriculum is geared towards "needs" based upon the concept of "take, make and throw away ... take, make, and throw away" (Icke 1990:14). The Green movement aims to focus attention on the fact that a continual and competitive struggle for economic and social dominance is not "normal", that unlimited material progress, unlimited economic growth and technological development for the exploitation of the environment is "un-natural" and akin to greed and, finally, that social relations (and a balance of power) in which the male is superior to the female does not follow a basic law of nature (Swart 1994:82-83; Jordaan 1994:6).

The aim of the Green protest, therefore, is "profound transformations of our social and political institutions, values, and ideas" (Robertson 1986:xvi). Green movements and Green politics are engaged in a worldwide struggle to transform the prevailing power structure in all knowledge pertaining to either the economy or the environment. This is seen to be of vital importance in an effort to *change the social consciousness*. David Icke (1990:3) explains that "Green in the political sense means far more than most people realise. It is a vast concept that includes environmental protection" and "fundamental social justice". Green politics rests on four pillars - *ecology, social responsibility, grassroots democracy* and *non-violence* - and is described as

an ecological, holistic, and feminist movement that transcends ... left versus right. It emphasizes the interconnectedness and interdependence of all phenomena, as well as the embeddedness of individuals and societies in the cyclical process of nature. It addresses the unjust and destructive dynamics of patriarchy. It calls for social responsibility and a sound, sustainable economic system, one that is ecological, decentralized, equitable, and comprised of flexible institutions, on in which people have significant control over their lives. In advocating a cooperative world order, Green politics rejects all forms of exploitation - of

nature, of individuals, social groups, and countries. It is committed to nonviolence at all levels. It encourages a rich cultural life that respects the pluralism within a society, and it honours the inner growth that leads to wisdom and compassion. Green politics, in short, is the political manifestation of the cultural shift to the new paradigm (Robertson 1986:xvi-xvii).

From the Green point of view it is important that independence from nature will not have more "status" than living close to nature; that, to have power over nature is not seen as "superior" while living close to nature is seen as "inferior" (Knill 1992:32); that, in fact, the "youth of the world should be educated to realise that the freedom to utilise the environment should be guided by appropriate responsibility" (Jordaan 1994:5-6). Hence Greens are critical of a school curriculum reflecting the view that rational knowledge has more "importance" than intuitive wisdom, competition has more "status" than co-operation, and economic expansionism gives access to more "power" than economic conservatism (Kelly 1994:40). Greens believe that, in order to promote an eco-conscious society and to dispel ignorance about the ecological crisis, the role of the school curriculum cannot be underestimated (Jordaan 1994:3).

Fundamental to the Green vision is a school curriculum that will include knowledge to empower each individual in terms of knowledge pertinent to the basic human right to a future in which nature is cherished (Kelly 1994:38). The aim is to challenge and transform curricular knowledge that is instrumental in concentrating wealth and power in the hands of a few; to challenge the authority of the few who have access to the decision-making structures (Kelly 1994:38); to challenge a curriculum in which "the notion that people must dominate nature emerges directly from the domination of some people by others" (Knill 1992:202). The aim is to break down the discriminatory "divisions" and promote a "new" democratic cultural ideal: the acceptance of "subjective" bodies of knowledge on equal terms to that of "objective" bodies of knowledge.

The Green movement points out that the power ascribed to scientific knowledge in the Western cultural ideal, as perpetuated in the school curriculum, has influenced man's perception of what nature is. The belief is that cultural entities like school curricula, the economic system

and processes of politics, as they are known to us, "are part and parcel" of the "patriarchal, exploitive, ... centralized, unecological" past, which is on the way out (Robertson 1986:xxi; Kelly 1994:39). Situations will have to be created to "force the established institutions to respond" so that eco-conscious knowledge will become part and parcel of all social and political institutions in society, so that the school curriculum will become a vehicle for promoting Green consciousness instead of a vehicle for the exploitation of nature (Robertson 1986:xxi). Hence the knowledge content of the school curriculum will have to be transformed in an effort to transform the dominant Western cultural ideal. At the same time, in order to change the balance of power in society, power has to be moved out of the hands of the economy and of the state and placed in the hands of people at local level. In other words, the economy has to be decentralised (Kelly 1994:42).

According to Spretnak and Capra (1986:162): "What we [the Greens] need then, is a shift from the current world order, based on national interest and national security, to a new one built on human interest and global security". The aim of the Green Movement is a school curriculum that will be designed under the guiding principle of holism in order to combat the spiritual impoverishment caused by an economy-oriented school curriculum. In such a curriculum it will be stressed that a rich inner life is worth much more than accumulated wealth; that to consume less is not always "backwards" and to reduce consumption is not a sacrifice, but a way to sustain humanity. Green politics sets out to address the negative influence of the Western economic ideal which has resulted in a school curriculum that is discriminatory and undemocratic because it is aimed at reducing people to the "value of labour power", while at the same time reducing nature to its "value to industry"; a school curriculum which does not subscribe to the Declaration of Human Rights, but is instrumental in putting restraints on the human being by granting him "less and less social space" (Knill 1992:202). In an effort to "democratise" the prevailing power structure in knowledge, the Green protest aims at gaining access to the knowledge-producing structures in society; at having the power to control the status of knowledge and, hence, at using the school curriculum as a tool in effecting the social acceptance of a "new" and "more" democratic power structure: one in which humankind and environment is regarded as "equal".

5.4.5.3 GREEN AND COMPETITIVE?

5.4.5.3.1 THE GREEN POINT OF VIEW

When, in 1983, the Greens published their first economic programme which included substantial proposals "for an ecologically balanced, appropriately scaled, self-organized (not state-controlled!) economy", the American media reported that these ideas were either "merely 'outlandish'... or that the Greens 'offer virtually nothing' on this issue" (Robertson 1986:xiii).

Although Greens challenge the "economy-oriented" school curriculum, they do so on the basis of the prevailing *accent* in such an economy-oriented school curriculum. Greens acknowledge the fact that the economic crisis is the most important *worry* in people's daily lives. However, they challenge the status of knowledge (enhanced by the focus of demands coming from the economy) which gives man excessive and un-natural ("more than enough") power over nature. They challenge the power of the few who use their position of power to sanction curricular knowledge that keeps the majority of students in ignorance about the detrimental effects, whether intended or unintended, of stimulating economic growth (Kelly 1994:42).

The school curriculum is criticised for aggravating the ecological crisis mainly because curricular knowledge is geared towards "needs" that are "tailored by the mass media to create a demand for useless commodities, each with a factor of 'planned obsolescence' built in" (Bookchin quoted in Knill 1992:202). Greens point out that, consequently, the result is a *crisis of consumption*, and not of scarcity of resources, owing to the prevailing emphasis on "more of the same will be better" (Kelly 1994:23).

The demand is that curricular knowledge related to the world of work should not be narrowly confined to "basic concepts" like "efficiency, productivity, GNP, and so forth ... without considering the social and ecological context" (Spretnak & Capra 1986:78). Children should be made *aware* of the global interrelatedness of man and nature and the fact that the economy is but one aspect of "a whole ecological and social fabric". The overemphasis in school curricula on "hard technology, wasteful consumption, and rapid exploitation of natural resources, all

motivated by a persistent obsession with undifferentiated growth", reflecting the "global obsession with wealth", will have to change towards an emphasis on the fact that "common decency tells us that the greedy, wasteful destruction of life is wrong" (Kelly 1994:34) and that human health is more important than human wealth (Kelly 1994:23). Children have to be taught that "short-term greed leads to long-term economic and environmental grief" (Miller quoted in Jordaan 1994:6)

From the Green perspective it is lack of "relevant" knowledge that has been the cause of the ecological crisis. While, for instance, the school curriculum provides the knowledge with which to exploit nature, there is a lack of eco-conscious knowledge. The school curriculum is therefore discriminating against nature – and humankind – insofar as it does not provide students with sufficient knowledge to make informed choices. Students are provided with partial knowledge only. What this amounts to, according to the Green Movement, is that a curriculum which is based upon objective scientific knowledge is not the whole "truth"; it does not present a complete picture. Curricular knowledge will also have to provide subjective bodies of knowledge, knowledge that will endow nature with equal "worth" and promote a respect for life. That is why the focus of demands in the power struggle is an emphasis on small is beautiful and the ideal of "living better with less" (Shuttleworth 1993:7); on a school curriculum that would not provide knowledge relevant only to a one-way exploitive process but also knowledge relevant to a partnership based upon interdependence: pertinent knowledge to the effect that by not degrading the environment, man is not degrading himself but establishing his *humanness* – an identity not associated with personal wealth – in a "new" democratic balance of power (Kelly 1994:24,22).

Hence the emphasis in demands, and the need of a Green economy based upon decentralisation and a culture of enterprise, is that curricular knowledge relating to the world of work will have to be *transformed* in order to serve an eco-conscious economy: from the accent on growth to an accent on sustainability; from the accent on "dependency" to an accent on enterprise; from the accent on consumption to an accent on conservation; from the accent on "disposable" to an accent on durable in which human life and quality goods will have top priority

(Shuttleworth 1993:7; Kelly 1994:23). As William Leiss (Hattingh 1994:5) puts it: "Everything depends upon whether we regard ... limits as a bitter disappointment or as a welcome opportunity to turn from quantitative to qualitative improvement in the course of creating a conserver society" in which the *relevant* (i.e. transformed) *knowledge* in the school curriculum has to play an important role. For, in the words of Ghandi (Icke 1990:21): "The earth has enough for everyone's need, but not for everyone's greed".

5.4.5.3.2 THE "COMPETITIVE" POINT OF VIEW

It is clear that the Green protest is having an influence on economists in support of a competitive point of view. The recognition that current "economic" knowledge has created a social problem is already visible in the reaction of Clem Sunter (Elektramark 1992b:32), an Anglo American director:

Environmentalism is becoming a part of mainstream business planning and is no longer simply an aspect of social responsibility programmes.

Furthermore, Ian McCrae (1992:5), chief executive of Escom and a member of the Executive Committee of the Industrial Environmental Forum of Southern Africa stated:

The environment is our responsibility. We have to accept this duty. Sustained development is just not possible without the protection and wise management of our resource base.

However, implicit in the above, as well as in the following reactions to the Green protest, is an important accent that calls for comment. So, for instance, Rob Reid (Elektramark 1992b:32), chairman of Shell UK says:

No business has a secure future unless it is environmentally acceptable,

and Engen (1995:back cover) offers to take steps

necessary to maintain a balance between protecting and conserving the environment, and supplying the energy our economy needs.

Although this interpretation of "sound economic reasons" is, according to the Green point of view, "a step in the right direction", it is only the first part in solving the problem and not yet a *Green economics*

(Knill 1992:195). However, gradually economic leaders in the competitive tradition are waking up to the fact that, especially in terms of their own demands on curricular knowledge:

Those who think of the green movement as the preserve of cranks ... have missed a fundamental shift in the attitudes of a huge proportion of the population of the developed world (Jones quoted in Elektramark 1992c:33).

The seriousness of the Green protest, as well as the influence it has on the perception of "relevant" knowledge in relation to a sound economy, is also acknowledged by Brian Huntley (1990:3), chief director of the National Botanical Institute, who remarks:

The 1990's witnessed a paradigm shift in our approach to environmental management, with the realisation that we are at once, both the first generation with the power [or knowledge] to destroy the world, but simultaneously the last generation that has the chance of averting global destruction ... In South Africa, we have recently experienced an unprecedented surge of interest in matters environmental - by captains of industry, [and] by politicians ... The critical interdependence of economic development, environmental health and quality of life is now widely appreciated ...

The two major emphases in most of the above comments in support of the competitive point of view are that curricular knowledge pertaining to environmental awareness in economic activities will have to keep in mind, *firstly*, the demands for sound economic development and, *secondly*, "the maintenance of a reasonable quality of life for all" regarding both economic well-being *and a healthy environment* (Van Rensburg 1992:44).

In terms of the Green protest such reactions point to a dawning realisation among informed people that this is a complete revolution in the social consciousness that is demanded, that the orthodox ("traditional") modern economy (and the corresponding balance of power in society) is in crisis because the status ("truth") of the knowledge (and the democratic principle) that has sustained it is in crisis; that basic to the Green protest is the demand for the *transformation* of both the "traditional" economy *and* the traditional power structure; and that educators and the school curriculum will have to play their part in the

change of social consciousness that is indispensable to a transformation in the "traditional" economy. In fact, that "an immense effort by *all sectors* of society is required if we are to cover even part of the distance on the road to sustainable development" (Louis Pienaar quoted in Van Rensburg 1992:44; italics added by this author); the implication of which is a "new" democratic balance of power and the acceptance of humankind and environment on equal terms.

5.4.6 SUMMARY

The magnitude of the *ecological crisis* has focused attention on the fact that the dominant Western cultural ideal – and the *role of scientific knowledge* in the emancipation of man from various kinds of oppression – is associated with exploiting man's natural surroundings. The emerging Green consciousness therefore aims at challenging the division in the status of different bodies of knowledge, at transforming the power structures responsible for a school curriculum-with a bias towards economic independence aimed at *mastery* and, hence, at eliminating the "overstressing" of natural resources.

Underlying the integrated and holistic approach of the Greens "to the current ecological, economic, and political crises, which they [maintain] ... are interrelated and global in nature", is the belief that the mechanistic world view reflected in the school curriculum has impoverished Western societies spiritually (Robertson 1986:xi). Consequently, the focus of demands coming from the Green movement is on *transforming* the bias of economy-oriented knowledge completely – from a competitive bias towards a Green bias; from a "more and bigger is better" bias towards a "living with less" bias.

The aim of the Green protest is a cultural revolution: a "new" democratic balance of power in which social status and power will not be linked to more than enough personal wealth, but in which the focus will be on *survival as a conscious choice*.

5.5 CONCLUSION

Education and wealth is *inextricably bound up* with prestige and power in the Western world today. In addition, economic power is perceived to

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be a prerequisite for social and political stability in the prevailing social order. Evident in the opposing perceptions regarding a *democratic balance of power*, therefore, is the question of *different values* interpreted either in terms of differences in social and economic interests, or in terms of basic values influenced by their specific relationship to a culture; be it the *economy* or *ecology*.

A *conflict of power* is always a major barrier to change. However, the most important *challenge* that mankind faces today, is to find solutions to the world's environmental problems, and in this the school curriculum will have to be a major tool.

CHAPTER 6

THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM AND THE STRUGGLE FOR POWER IN EDUCATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the accent in the *demands* of a *selection of pressure groups* – as they are presented in Chapters 4 and 5 – will be the focus of attention. The aim is to *explore* the *educational acceptability* of these demands on the school curriculum. In order to do this, it will be necessary to identify certain norms for evaluation, which can be used in the construction of the necessary criteria.

According to Van Rensburg, Kilian and Landman (1979:239) the word criterion derives from three Greek words: *kriterion* – distinguishing mark or measure; *krinoo* – to divide or explain; and *krinein* – to expose for selection or a standard of judgement. Hence an educational criterion is a standard of judgement which is formulated after careful consideration of the nature of education and then used as a norm for evaluation.

Such criteria, although they do not profess to absolute objectivity, will serve to highlight the relationship between the school curriculum and the focus of demands in the struggle for power. However, the possibility remains that such criteria may be open to controversy due to the subjectivity inherent in the construction of any specific set of criteria. Nevertheless, without evaluation the educational acceptability of demands on the school curriculum cannot be commented upon. An attempt will therefore be made to identify norms in which the nature of education – and not the manifestation of a particular world view – is revealed. In this way it may be possible to establish adequate educational criteria which can be used to evaluate the educational acceptability of the demands made upon the school curriculum by the selection of power struggles under discussion.

6.2 EDUCATIONAL CRITERIA FOR THE EVALUATION OF THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM AS A MEANS OF EDUCATION

Drawing upon research by De Vries, Du Plessis and Steyn (1992:48-62), Van der Westhuizen (1995:118-136; 214-230), as well as CUMSA 2 (1994), the following seven criteria for the educational acceptability of a school curriculum are put forward. However, when evaluating the selection of power struggles, as described in Chapters 4 and 5, only those criteria relevant to each example will be used.

6.2.1 LEGITIMACY

Legitimacy is not easy to define. Although legitimacy has its roots in the dominant political, cultural, religious and economic ideals, it is the political ideals which - to a large extent - determine the legitimacy of knowledge. This means that *democratic principles, equal opportunities, affirmative action, human rights, a growing or stable economy* all come into play in the description of legitimacy. According to CUMSA 2 (1994:22-23) this has to include "the unlocking of knowledge as structured by humankind" as well as "the mastering of related skills and a further orientation regarding":

- * the different economic systems ... with a view to the development of economic literacy and entrepreneurial skills;
- * political systems with the intention of developing political literacy;
- * different religions and cultures; as well as
- * social and community life, including married and family life.

However what is important, is that legitimacy, which should be grounded in the *balance* between well-roundedness and literacy in the cultural aspects of reality, is, in fact, dependent upon what is regarded as *valid and meaningful knowledge in a particular reality*. Legitimacy is, therefore, dependent upon acceptance by the general public, acceptance by the majority of people, or acceptance by the government of the day; in other words, legitimacy is dependent upon the prevailing *social consciousness* or dominant paradigm of truth.

As such, the following six criteria put forward are validated by, as well as contingent upon, the criterion of legitimacy.

6.2.2 RELEVANCE

The relevance of knowledge is determined, first and foremost, by the extent to which it is instrumental in satisfying individual, community and national needs. *Relevance* is mostly *linked* to knowledge which would enhance the *social, political and economic well-being* of the individual, community or nation.

Individual needs include needs relevant to

- * the social reality of the child; and
- * the economic reality (or world of work) to which the child will have access.

Implicit in **community needs** is any

- * knowledge that is relevant to socially acceptable norms upon which the *quality of life* in the community is dependent; and
- * knowledge which will *not jeopardise the social, political and economic well-being of the community*.

National needs include knowledge that is relevant to

- * the needs of a *sound economy*, which in Western-oriented societies is seen as a prerequisite for political and social stability; and
- * the *sensible utilisation* of the limited environmental resources: this is imperative if mankind is to survive on earth.

6.2.3 ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountable curricular knowledge aims at preparing the child for a meaningful and independent future in a stable cultural reality. In the *first* place, this includes the recognition of *human dignity*. In the *second* place, this means that a *balance* will have to be maintained between knowledge, skills and values, as well as between academic and "useful" (or applied) knowledge.

In addition, the White Paper on Education and Training in a Democratic South Africa (1995:17), for example, stresses that accountability

presupposes a *culture of teaching*, a *culture of learning*, and a *culture of management*. This means that the aim of curricular knowledge will be to educate the child in terms of a common educational purpose as well as "clear, mutually agreed and understood responsibilities". Insofar as the school curriculum is an integral component of a particular cultural reality, the aim of the school curriculum is to empower the student in terms of that particular cultural reality: to equip the child to make *informed choices*.

Notwithstanding the fact that accountable curricular knowledge (as an integral part of "clear, mutually agreed and understood responsibilities" in a stable social reality) makes provision for innovation, it is *not the means* by which a particular interest group aims to establish radical cultural changes. The implication is that an educational school curriculum cannot be an instrument of a total cultural revolution.

6.2.4 ADAPTABILITY

Adaptability implies that curricular knowledge is *not rigid*. Such knowledge has to be open to changes due to the growing socio-political, cultural and economic complexity as well as the increasing diversity of modern societies. However, although curricular knowledge has to allow for *changing needs* at individual, community and national level, it is important that a *balance* be maintained among all the different demands being made on the curriculum. At the same time, allowance should be made for the aims of education especially in terms of character development and well-roundedness.

6.2.5 DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES

Fundamental to the concept of "democracy" is the interpretation of *freedom* and *equality* in terms of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The main focus in democratic principles is on the "right of access to resources as a necessary condition for equal rights to life [and] liberty" (or freedom) (quoted in Beyer 1988:156). In order to achieve freedom and equality, it is important to "equally share ... the cultural resources that make such rights possible". The assumption is that freedom is dependent upon unrestricted access to spiritual and

cultural resources which "enrich life and enhance human happiness" (Beyer 1988:156-157).

Basic to the principle of *participatory* democracy – a recent development in the interpretation of democracy – is that it is not "dependent upon meeting the needs of any one class [or group] for its legitimacy. It embraces the needs of all cultural groups" interpreted in terms of both freedom and equality. Implicit in the concept of participatory democracy, therefore, is that social structures like the school curriculum has to be "both free from coercion or forces beyond" the control of students and empower students to take actions which they believe will be positive. Likewise, each member of a "social group is to be secure from forces that would limit his/her actions, be they economic, political, or social" (Beyer 1988:158-159). However, the concepts of both freedom and equality imply certain *social limits* (or constraints): *firstly* that no action will restrain or coerce any other; *secondly* that social, economic or political barriers are not permissible. Participatory democracy implies that the well-being of the individual, as well as the well-being of the group and society at large, will have to be taken into account in curricular knowledge.

For the purpose of this study, then, democratic principles in curricular knowledge will be taken to mean:

- * freedom from *oppression*;
- * freedom of opportunity to *share* cultural resources;
- * equal *access* to curricular knowledge;
- * equal *worth* in terms of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: in other words that "differentiation" on any grounds – gender; sexual orientation; race; social class; ability; social, cultural, economic or religious orientation – will be deemed to be discrimination.

6.2.6 SUSTAINABILITY

Primarily man, both in and of the natural environment, has to maintain a *sustainable relationship with the natural environment* taking into account the four imperatives identified in the definition of sustainability

(cf Quinlan 1992/3:55-66; Swart 1994:10,228-230; Schreuder 1994). These imperatives are:

- *sustainable development*: improving the quality of life within the constraints and capacity of eco-systems;
- *sustainable economy*: this is the result of sustainable development in which the natural resources are protected by an economy adapted to develop in terms of expert knowledge and technical efficiency and the non-exploitation of natural resources;
- *sustainable use*: knowledge pertinent to the rehabilitation of natural resources;
- *sustainable community/society*: this is a society of individuals committed to the use of the available eco-systems in such a way that the quality of human life on earth will be maintained for present and for future generations.

In terms of sustainability curricular knowledge would have to promote both development and conservation *within* the confines of the *restrictions on the earth's natural resources*. The assumption is that "if an activity is sustainable, for all practical purposes it can go on forever" (quoted in Schreuder 1994:3).

6.2.7 EFFECTIVE EDUCATION PRACTICE

The impact of curricular knowledge on the child is determined by effective education practice. Effective education practice, therefore, includes both the *formal* curriculum as well as the *hidden* curriculum. In both of these the role of the teacher in effective education practice is crucial. Should the teacher regulate school knowledge in such a way that it is *transmitted* to a *passive* child (Freire's "banking system"), it amounts to moulding a child to fit into a preconceived ideal of society. In contrast to this so-called "traditional" approach, an *active process* allows for learner participation in the learning process.

The active learning process entails a programme of discussion, mutual respect, and constructive interaction (between the learner and the teacher). However as Wally Morrow (1994:28) so emphatically states: "Teachers are critical agents in the establishment of formal learning, and we are misled by the idea that learners could take the lead in this

project". Nevertheless the active learning process (effective education practice) is a learning process in which the learner will increasingly be able to *take command* of both his/her own learning process as well as his/her own development. One of the most important aspects of an active learning process is the focus on a *culture of learning* (which implies a *culture of teaching*). In fact, this is widely held to be the cornerstone of effective education practice – insofar as it is basic to the aim of a school curriculum that has to aid and equip the learner with knowledge and skills which are necessary to control his/her own destiny in a complex and diverse society. This is especially important if the challenges of the twentieth century have to be met.

In addition, effective education practice plays an important role in preventing "restrictions" (or barriers) – such as prejudice, disadvantage or discrimination – directly or indirectly related to a specific selection of curricular knowledge.

6.3 AN EDUCATIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM AND FEMINISM

6.3.1 THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM AS A MEANS OF EDUCATION

(cf Chapters 4.3 & 6.2)

The fact that Feminism criticises the school curriculum – mainly because it reproduces the dominant Western cultural ideal – is not educationally viable in terms of **legitimacy**. It is the aim of the school curriculum to perpetuate the dominant cultural ideal as long as it is legitimised by the prevailing social consciousness. However, in terms of **adaptability** a case can be made out for the inability of the curriculum to make provision for changes that have occurred in the status of women in Western societies.

Another claim of Feminism is that girls are being socialised into a stereotyped gender pattern which they find discriminating. Again, this is a complex issue. **Relevant** curricular knowledge has to take into account community needs which include preserving the quality of life. In the dominant cultural tradition – as legitimised by the social consciousness – the quality of life (in most societies) is closely

associated with a healthy nuclear family in which girls will have to play a major role. In the sense that a balance has to be achieved between what is good for the individual and what is good for the community, demands by certain Feminist groups – to eliminate all "inequalities" between girls and boys – are not educationally viable. The traditional role of boys and girls are seen as the cornerstone of a stable society. These roles – criticised by the feminists precisely because they are accepted as "normal" – are constructed by society and not by the school curriculum. Moreover, not all girls have the desire to subscribe to the demand of equality as put forward by Feminism. For many women the issue is not equality at all costs, but that curricular knowledge would make provision for the femininity of girls without which the quality of life – in terms of the importance of a healthy nuclear family – will deteriorate. The question of relevance in terms of feminist demands for *equality* is clearly a delicate one. The reason for this is that knowledge pertaining to women and feminine qualities – as the cornerstone of a "happy family" in a healthy society – is deemed **legitimate** by the prevailing social consciousness.

The demands for equal access to knowledge, especially in relation to the world of work, however, may be justified in terms of the criterion of **relevancy**. All people have to be free to achieve economic independence which is closely related to personal status. However, it is not only the school curriculum, but also the social consciousness that plays a role in denying women equal access to curricular knowledge and subsequent access to high status occupations. This is evident from the apparent paradox between a high level of academic performance and a low level of participation in technology and prestigious programmes on the part of women. The latter phenomenon indicates that it is not only curricular knowledge that determines the so-called "life-chances" of girls in the economy. To a large extent, the "life-chances" of girls are determined by the fact that the "traditional" division between male and female work (associated with the central position of the female in the ideal of a happy nuclear family) is deemed legitimate by society at large.

Feminism claims that the boundaries of the division between "more important" and "less important" knowledge has to be eliminated in the school. According to Feminism, these boundaries are discriminatory

because they are socially constructed. These claims are educationally viable if **democratic principles**, especially "equality", are taken into account. However, this is a complex issue. Much of what Feminism calls "discrimination" is in fact a reflection of the acceptable norms of the community. As such they are not experienced by all girls in the school as discrimination.

Taking into consideration **democratic principles**, the claim that curricular knowledge is "oppressive" - that it does not allow girls the freedom to have an equal share in cultural resources - has some justification. Again, the social conscience plays an important role in this respect. However, such a claim may be justified in terms of *human dignity*. The claim that the school curriculum should reflect a more balanced power structure is more difficult to evaluate - as a "balanced power structure" is in this case interpreted in terms of feminist ideals. Such a claim may be "accountable" in terms of feminist culture, but whether it is **accountable** in terms of the goal of education and the world view of society at large is a debatable point. There may, however, be some educational validity to this claim in terms of **adaptability** to changing cultural norms. On the whole, the aims of these demands are a change of consciousness in an attempt to effect a cultural revolution (for social control). In addition to the professed aim of enhancing the well-being of the feminine gender as a group, Feminism aims to use the curriculum as an instrument to gain control of the minds of people in order to gain control of the social power structures which also control curricular knowledge. This cannot be accounted for in educational terms.

The demand of Feminism that the hidden curriculum be not discriminatory can be educationally justified in terms of **effective education practice**. Insofar as girls are not put in possession of knowledge to control their own future - one of the cornerstones of effective education practice - this claim can be justified. In addition it is the duty of teachers to make sure that curricular knowledge is put into practice in such a way that human dignity will be preserved.

6.3.2 SUMMARY

Although the aims of Feminism are not always reconcilable with the accepted norms of femininity (as a positive attribute), demands of Feminism have succeeded in highlighting intended and unintended bias and prejudice against women and the culture of women in the school curriculum. What has become clear, too, is that it is the prevailing power structure, with all its discrimination, bias and prejudice, that is reflected in curricular knowledge. It is not in the first place a question of the school curriculum being discriminatory, biased or prejudiced. This is borne out by the fact that patterns of employment play a major role in the "definition" of equality of opportunity with a view to becoming part of the current power structure.

6.4 AN EDUCATIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM AND THE GAY MOVEMENT

6.4.1 THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM AS A MEANS OF EDUCATION (cf Chapters 4.4 & 6.2)

To evaluate the demands of the Gay movement is difficult as the question of homosexuality is largely a delicate moral issue. In terms of **legitimacy** the claims of the Gay movement is not educationally viable. The inclusion of knowledge about homosexuality in the school curriculum is not acceptable in terms of the dominant social consciousness: the dominant tradition is not pro-homosexuality. The same applies to Gay criticism of the fact that the school curriculum reflects the dominant cultural tradition of objective knowledge as well as the dominant pattern of male authority in terms of the "traditional" distinction between male and female attributes. However, in terms of a *meaningful existence* there may be educational justification for such claims insofar as knowledge concerning the pattern of patriarchy in Western societies is not perceived as valid or meaningful by Gays. This perception is understandable as Gays, being a subgroup of society, subscribe to norms that are not always the accepted norms of society at large.

Relevance, as a measure of judgement, presents contradictions when applied to Gay demands. On the *one* hand, it can be argued that the

demands of gays to be recognised in the school curriculum is educationally justified in terms of the *social reality* (human dignity) of the child but, on the *other* hand, the balance between the "quality of life" of the gay population and the "quality of life" of society at large has to be maintained. Hence the demands of the Gay movement is neither **legitimate** nor **relevant** insofar as the aim of the school curriculum is to perpetuate the acceptable social norms. However, the claim - also in terms of **effective education practice** - that the Gay population is "restricted" because of the absence of knowledge that would equip homosexual as well as heterosexual students to make informed decisions about homosexuality, is educationally justifiable. In addition - also in terms **effective education practice** - there is justification for claims that gay students are entitled to have access to knowledge which will put them in control of their own futures. The same applies to the claim that prejudice - especially in the *hidden curriculum* - is to the disadvantage of gay students.

It is in terms of **adaptability** - insofar as curricular knowledge has to allow for diversity and changing values - that the claims of Gays may have educational justification. Yet at present society at large is not sympathetic to the Gay cause. It is not educationally justifiable to include curricular knowledge that is not deemed **legitimate** by society at large. The unacceptability of such knowledge is substantiated by the "furore" with which the implementation of Gay knowledge into a specific curriculum had been met. In terms of **accountability** it may be argued that the claim of *human dignity* and personal development can be justified in educational terms. By the same token it is not educationally viable for the school curriculum to negate the Gay culture - taking into consideration the call for knowledge pertinent to the *making of informed choices*. However, to be accountable, the school curriculum has to conform to a common educational goal dependent upon the dominant cultural norm which, in this instance, is the heterosexual male (and his place in a "happy" family as part of a healthy social structure). The aim of education is not to change the social consciousness but to reflect the values of society at large. This consideration profoundly affects the claim of **accountability**. The Gay population may argue that the curriculum is not accountable because it does not portray the world view of the Gay population. However, the transformation of knowledge

to bring about a total transformation of social consciousness (for social control) cannot be accounted for in educational terms: the aim of the school curriculum is to portray the moral tradition of society at large.

Another claim by Gays is that discriminatory measures in the school curriculum prevent gay persons from gaining equal access to the economy. Although the claim as such is educationally justified in terms of relevance and **democratic principles**, it is again a complex issue. It may not always be a lack of knowledge that prevents a gay person from "getting a job"; it may be the fact that the person is gay. In other words, the "restriction" is not imposed by the school curriculum; curricular knowledge reflects a "restriction" that is **legitimised** by the prevailing social consciousness. As in the case of Feminism, it has to be stated that in educational terms the school curriculum should not be partner to discriminatory practices, but equal access to curricular knowledge cannot guarantee positive treatment by society at large. This is dependent upon the prevailing social norms.

It is mainly in terms of **democratic principles** that a case can be made out for justified claims of discrimination. Such claims include that gay persons do not have a "share" in curricular knowledge mainly because they are not accredited as "worthy" or equal to heterosexual persons, and that, in fact, gay persons are disempowered by the school curriculum. Claims of this nature may be justified in terms of **democratic principles** underpinned by the Declaration of Human Rights – according to which equality and equal access to all cultural resources is seen as a basic human right.

On the whole, then, the claims of Gays are mainly justified in terms of *human dignity* and the imperative *to be able to control one's own destiny*. In terms of the contrast between the Gay culture and the dominant social and cultural tradition (based upon a healthy nuclear family as a basis of a healthy social reality), combined with the widespread social antagonism against homosexuality as a form of being, the claims by the Gay movement regarding the school curriculum cannot be educationally justified. Most of the claims of the Gay movement have in view a complete cultural revolution; a complete change of

consciousness: control of the school curriculum to establish a new cultural awareness which is not educationally justified.

6.4.2 SUMMARY

The claims by the Gay movement regarding the school curriculum have been instrumental in focusing attention on the fact that the power ascribed to knowledge in the school curriculum is a reflection of the power ascribed to knowledge in society. In addition, the Gay movement has identified instances of discrimination in the school curriculum which, if attended to, will promote the well-being of the gay population without major changes to the power structure in society.

6.5 AN EDUCATIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM AND PEOPLE'S EDUCATION

6.5.1 THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM AS A MEANS OF EDUCATION (cf Chapters 4.5 & 6.2)

Underlying the demands for the implementation of People's Education was not only the problem of reducing the inequalities in the school curriculum but also the question of trust. Consequently, the criterion of **legitimacy**, when applied to the claims of People's Education, presents contradictions. For a long time, the school curriculum has been **legitimate** insofar as it has been perpetuating the cultural ideal of the dominant (though enforced in the eyes of the "people") social culture. However, voices from within the dominant culture – for example, the De Lange Report in 1981 – have been pointing out that, in terms of the *majority* culture, legitimacy is a grave problem. It is in this sense that the "legitimacy" of claims from People's Education have to be considered. Claims that the school curriculum in most schools attended by the "people" is not valid and meaningful to the majority of the "people" – mainly because it is dependent upon the Western cultural ideal which is not "legitimate" in terms of the indigenous culture – may, to a certain extent, be accounted for in educational terms. This, in particular, concerns the claim that in the content of the History curriculum there are instances of gross "misrepresentation" which is alienating to the people. Given such "misrepresentation" this amounts

to a *negation* of the indigenous culture and hence these claims are educationally justifiable in terms of *human dignity* as well.

(What is interesting in the "new" South Africa, however, is that in spite of the above claims, there is a tendency among the black "elite" to send their children to schools in which the indigenous culture is not predominant. This is mainly due to a perception that the "standard" of education is higher in schools with a Western-oriented school curriculum.)

Evaluating the demands of People's Education in terms of **relevance** is problematical as well. The claim is that the overwhelming Western bias of the school curriculum is not conducive to a democratic balance of power in a national social structure in which the majority of people do not subscribe to the values and norms of Western culture. This claim as well as the claim that the curriculum is too academic for the needs of the majority of people, especially in terms of their individual cultural development, can, to a certain extent, be justified in terms of **relevance**. The same applies to demands pertinent to the practical job market and small business industry so typical of the indigenous culture. However, in terms of the present and future needs of a society that is not wholly traditional anymore (like the "new" South Africa) demands that the school curriculum be wholly practically-oriented towards the indigenous culture cannot be justified. Western culture, to a greater or a lesser extent will have to be taken into account. In any contemporary social, political and economic power structure the inclusion of knowledge pertinent to sophisticated science and technology, as well as leadership positions, is important.

The educational viability of claims that traditional education practice – or the banking system of transmitting knowledge – is ineffectual, is borne out by a description of **effective education practice**. One of the claims is, quite rightly, that teachers are not the sole possessors of knowledge. However, the teacher plays an important role in a *culture of learning*. The implication is that active involvement of both the teacher and the student is imperative in an effort to equip the child to take control of his/her own future. Hence the claim of People's Education that the child, or the will of the child, is of central

importance in the school curriculum, is not educationally sound. Throughout a balance has to be preserved between the needs of the child and the needs of society. The aim of curricular knowledge is to establish a *culture of learning*; not a culture of "non-learning".

The intentional destruction of a culture of learning is contrary to the requirements of **effective education practice** and cannot, for whatever reason, be justified in educational terms. In addition, it is not educationally sound – in terms of **democratic principles** – to "democratise" knowledge in such a way that, because the students themselves have the right to determine "what shall be taught", the result is a situation of "non-learning". Such a situation in which, for example, other students are deprived of their "democratic" right to be equipped for study at higher educational institutions makes a mockery of real democracy. As Nosimphiwe Tshangatshana (Oppelt 1995:17) remarked at the nineteenth anniversary of the 1976 student uprising in Soweto: "I want to study economics when I finish matric ... But how can we study in schools that have been destroyed".

However, also in terms of **democratic principles**, the claim that the patterns of authority (especially apartheid) evident in the school curriculum is discriminatory, is educationally viable. It is contrary to the ideal of *freedom* for the bias in the traditional school curriculum to be predominantly against black culture and black people as individuals or as a group. It is also contrary to the ideal of *equality* for blacks to be denied equal "worth" in the school curriculum; for blacks to be denied equal access to cultural resources; and for blacks to be subject to oppression in terms of the *hidden curriculum*. Consequently, these claims can be justified educationally. An educational school curriculum has to take into consideration that all people are entitled to the basic human rights of freedom and equality. Likewise, the claim that the differentiation in the status of knowledge – black has negative connotations and white positive connotations – is discriminatory, can be educationally justified in terms of the democratic principle of equality.

In addition the claim that the school curriculum should make allowance for people's own culture (the "people's" culture) is educationally viable in terms of **adaptability**.

It is, however, not educationally justifiable that the concept of "relevant" knowledge has been "expanded" in such a way by People's Education that it has come to include knowledge "relevant" to instigating unrest and political agitation. Neither can the demand for "collective action" – implicating teachers, students and the school curriculum in a culture of "non-learning" – in order to effect a cultural revolution, be justified in terms of either **effective education practice** or **accountability**.

The claim that the school curriculum does not reflect a balanced power structure of reality – especially in terms of the cultural tradition of the "majority of people" in South Africa – may be educationally viable. Nevertheless, the aim of a school curriculum is to prepare students for an independent future in a *stable* society. The demand that a school curriculum should be instrumental in a total cultural revolution, cannot – in terms of **accountability** – be educationally justified. It is contrary to the educational ideal that a school curriculum should become the major vehicle in a cultural revolution (for social control).

6.5.2 SUMMARY

In contrast to the demands of Feminism and the Gay movement, the demands of People's Education are – by virtue of a complete political turn-about in South Africa – in the process of being implemented as a whole in the school curriculum of the "new" South Africa. People's Education and their struggle for power is history. Whether the new "People's" curriculum, which is being constructed by followers of the People's Education movement, will succeed in reflecting a democratic balance of power, only the future will tell.

6.6 AN EDUCATIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM AND THE ECONOMY

6.6.1 THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM AS A MEANS OF EDUCATION

(cf Chapters 5.3 & 6.2)

The ongoing demand of the economy is that the school curriculum has to make allowances for successive changes in the economy. In terms of

legitimacy this is educationally acceptable. The complex interdependency between a sound economy and political stability is acknowledged in the dominant cultural ideal prevailing in most contemporary societies. At the same time, these demands are legitimised by the social consciousness insofar as access to the economy, to a large extent, determines the "identity" of most men – and increasingly of women too. Consequently, society at large sees the inclusion of "relevant" knowledge in the school curriculum mainly in terms of the world of work. Hence the demands of the economy is justifiable in terms of **relevance** and of **accountability**. This is true of **adaptability** as well. A school curriculum is not rigid; it has to make allowances for economic changes and growing diversity. In this sense the demand of the economy is educationally sound. However, when the economic demands on the school curriculum is part of an effort to control the school curriculum in order to sustain political domination (or social control) these demands become problematical.

There is a complex interrelationship among the social, economic, political and educational aspects in the cultural reality. Hence it is not always easy to discern whether efforts by governments – or economic pressure groups – to implement economic-oriented knowledge into the school curriculum are educationally justifiable in terms of the **democratic principle** of equality, on the *one* hand, or whether, on the *other* hand, they are not educationally justifiable insofar as the curriculum is perceived (by a government or employers) as a means of restricting the "sharing" of cultural resources. Whether economic demands on the school curriculum will be deemed **legitimate** in any final analysis will depend upon the prevailing social consciousness in the particular social reality in which such demands are made.

In terms of the **democratic principles** – and hence no division in the status of knowledge – it is not so easy to evaluate economic demands on the school curriculum. It may be argued that the demands of the economy are aimed at providing equal opportunities for access to the economy. In this sense the demand for the inclusion of knowledge "relevant" to the world of work can be justified in terms of the democratic principle of equality. Should any demand of the economy, however, jeopardise the balance between a stable society and the well-being of the individual, such a demand would not be educationally

justifiable in terms of democratic principles. However, demands of the economy are not the cause of "divisions" – or the difference in social status – in knowledge. The *worth* accredited to different bodies of knowledge, or different occupations, are created (and legitimised) in the social consciousness.

This has a bearing upon **sustainability** as well. There is educational justification for all claims from the economy that observe the criteria for sustainable development, but claims that do not observe these criteria cannot be justified in educational terms. The emerging demands of the economy in terms of private enterprise may be seen as a move towards sustainability and hence be educationally viable. It has to be mentioned, though, that demands for knowledge which would favour economic development – for example advanced scientific and technological expertise – have been instrumental in locating the problem areas within the ecological crisis.

6.6.2 SUMMARY

It is evident that, on the whole, most claims on the school curriculum reflect economic demands. In addition, most economic demands are legitimised in terms of the perception (or social consciousness) that access to the economy is imperative to the "life chances" of the majority of people on earth. Consequently, most of these demands are underpinned by visions of accumulated (personal) wealth.

Economic demands on the school curriculum, therefore, have been instrumental in focusing attention on the possibility that the "ecological crisis" is the result of a social crisis. A social crisis propelled by the interpretation of "equality" in terms of access to the economy. However the "right" of equality on these terms was first brought to the attention of "all and sundry" by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. Since then, in one way or another, equal access to the economy has been the basis from which most pressure groups have been developing their economic claims on the school curriculum.

6.7 AN EDUCATIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM AND THE ENVIRONMENT (THE GREEN MOVEMENT)

6.7.1 THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM AS A MEANS OF EDUCATION (cf Chapters 5.4 & 6.2)

In terms of **legitimacy** the demands of the Green movement are educationally justifiable on two counts. *Firstly*, insofar as knowledge of different cultures is important and, *secondly*, insofar as the Declaration of Basic Human Rights makes provision for the right of each individual to a healthy environment. A contradiction arises in the fact that the accent in the dominant cultural tradition is on economic growth which, to some degree, implicates the "legitimacy" of the demands of the Green movement. Any objection on the grounds of legitimacy may, however, be invalidated by the importance of a healthy balance in the environment for the survival of mankind.

The demand that the curriculum should include knowledge pertinent to nature as of equal worth to knowledge on human beings may be justified in terms of **adaptability** as well as in terms of **democratic principles**. Knowledge in the school curriculum should not be rigid but should make provision for changes and diversity in social awareness (adaptability). It is not educationally viable for the "worth" of the environment to be negated in curricular knowledge. Discrimination (counter to democratic principles) is evident whenever the environment is seen only in terms of its "usefulness" (or exploitive value) as a resource base for human material enrichment.

Seeing that curricular knowledge aims to make provision for individual needs (human dignity and a healthy environment) as well as national needs (sensible usage of limited natural resources in order to maintain a sound economy), the demand of the Green movement is highly relevant. Hence there is no problem in justifying these claims in terms of **relevance**.

It is in terms of **accountability** that a problem may arise. There is educational justification for the claim of the Green movement that

knowledge about the environment is vital to the ability to *make informed choices*. However, the demand of the Green movement that knowledge in the school curriculum should be adapted to effect a change of consciousness may be seen as a "cultural revolution" (for social control). Yet **accountability** has to be measured in terms of the perceived imperative, in most informed circles, that, for mankind to survive, it is essential to sustain nature. Consequently **sustainability** is the most important criterion when it comes to evaluating the demands of the Green movement. The aim of the Green movement is to implement curricular knowledge which will create environmental awareness and equip the learner with technical know-how as well as expert knowledge in order to prevent the exploitation of natural resources. In educational terms, this aim is viable and of cardinal importance.

6.7.2 SUMMARY

The demand of the Green movement to transform curricular knowledge in accordance with the Green vision of a democratic balance of power in society, has focused attention on the fact that no matter what our social, political or economic inclinations are, they can only be put into practice within the confines of our natural resources. In this respect, the aims of the Green movement are, to a large extent, not only educationally justified, but justifiable in terms of any cultural imperative.

6.8 CONCLUSION

The demands of these struggles for power show that the school curriculum *does not always succeed* in the *reproduction* of a specific set of social relations; and, that demands for changes in the school curriculum are usually influenced by factors external to the educational process. However these *external forces* (or demands from power struggles) influence the social consciousness by virtue of which a dominant culture is legitimised. Because the school curriculum is all about perpetuating the dominant cultural tradition, there is a very real *relationship* between demands on the school curriculum and the struggle for power. The balance of power inherent in curricular knowledge is a reflection and the outcome of demands from previous power struggles

insofar as the knowledge content of the school curriculum is legitimised by the interpretation given to "democracy" or "equality" in terms of the *dominant culture* which is the outcome of previous power struggles. The implication is that, on the *one* hand, an educational *school curriculum cannot effect radical changes in the prevailing social power structure*, but, on the *other* hand, changes in the balance of power in society cannot be effected without the school curriculum.

Although the aim (and hence the accent in the demands) of all five selected power struggles is to introduce "proper" (or "relevant") knowledge into the school curriculum in order to "secure" or "safeguard" a "better" quality of life and a "more democratic" power structure – albeit in each case in terms of the ideals of the specific power struggle under discussion – the Green movement is the *first pressure group to emphasise that the earth is "finite" and that natural resources are limited*.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 CONCLUSIONS

From the preceding chapters it has become clear that the legitimacy of the school curriculum is dependent upon the *social consciousness*. Hence the intensity of any controversy about the school curriculum is deeply affected by major *shifts* in the authority of power which, in turn, is influenced by changing conceptions of truth and changing interpretations of what democracy means in terms of basic human rights. Couched in different terms, the school curriculum is deeply influenced by the changing ideal of "civilised" living or the "acceptable" distribution of power in each specific community or country in which a struggle of power is being enacted. What is apparent, too, is that the prevailing and intensifying demands on the school curriculum are symptomatic of the fact that power forms part of everyday life and, especially, that it is the dominant *Western cultural paradigm* (and the status of science) that is suffering a *crisis*. Furthermore, the controversies raging about the school curriculum are mostly concerned with preserving or transforming the very *foundations* upon which the power structures of the modern cultural ideal have been dependent.

The Western cultural ideal is based upon the unprecedented rapid advancement of means and ways to use knowledge (especially *scientific knowledge*) in order to attain or exercise power as a means of oppression or exploitation (even annihilation) of both human and non-human resources. Inherent in the contradiction basic to the Western cultural ideal is a *conflict of power*. The fundamental modern drive for human self-realisation is the drive to gain access to those very power structures which give access to domination (and are perceived to be the cause of the "oppression" that is being criticised). Hence - in accordance with the modern perception that economic independence is the most important determinant of social status or power - demands focusing on the status of economy-oriented knowledge in the school

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curriculum have been increasing. Based on the traditional assumption that economic well-being (or personal wealth) is instrumental in overcoming social constraints and exclusion from power structures in society, access to (or the ownership of) economy-oriented curricular knowledge have been central to demands on the school curriculum in most of the struggles against poverty, injustice or domination.

In the ongoing quest for "democracy", demands on the school curriculum reflect the struggle for the progressive liberation of human beings from all traditional limits or constraints barring groups of people from becoming part of the decision-making structures in society. In the latter part of the twentieth century the accent in most of these demands are changing. For the first time *demands* are focused upon, not only "more science" or "more technology" in the drive towards emancipation, but also on the *liberation of human beings as well as the non-human world* from the restrictions of scientific knowledge. Likewise, demands on the school curriculum reflect the struggle for the "liberation" of both humans and the environment from the constraints imposed by the very foundation of the modern quest for self-realisation since the Industrial Revolution: the unlimited exploitation of natural resources by means of "superior" (scientific) knowledge.

Thus in one way or another the "*status*" of *scientific knowledge* – in terms of objectivity or as the authority by means of which true and certain knowledge can be justified – is fundamental to most of the prevailing demands on the school curriculum in the struggle for power. However, in the social consciousness, *knowledge and status* have become synonymous to knowledge and empowerment. Not only scientific knowledge anymore, but all kinds of knowledge are gaining in importance in terms of the growing perception that it is the *power* of the *ownership of knowledge*, and not the power of the ownership of wealth, that is the most important *instrument* in determining the *rules of power* for society as a whole. Consequently, the *school curriculum* – as the accepted means of gaining access to knowledge, which is perceived to grant acceptance in any desired power structure – has become the *pivotal point in controversies* about breaking down the discriminatory divisions perceived to be evident in the prevailing balance of power in Western societies. The implication is that the school curriculum (and meanings in particular) will increasingly become the

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object of more and varied scrutiny. However, this is to be expected in the struggle for knowledge power and is important in maintaining a democratic balance of power in society.

7.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

7.2.1 QUESTIONS ABOUT THE AIM OF THE CURRICULUM

The content of the school curriculum is determined by the underlying social and economic structure of society (as well as by powerful interest groups). It follows then that curricular knowledge, while pressurised to take into account the (often contradictory) individual, social, cultural and economic dimensions of the social reality, will at the same time have to be relevant to the future in a multi-cultural and complex socio-economic reality.

In curricular planning, therefore, answers to certain important questions will have to be found through further research. These will have to include, *inter alia*, the following:

What is the role of a curriculum in a world in which industrial-age dependencies are being questioned? (Shuttleworth 1993:200).

What is the role of the school curriculum in a world in which economic rationality is giving way to cultural rationality? (Bowen 1981:556).

What is the role of the school curriculum in a world in which the relationship between the knowledge content of the curriculum and the environment will need careful consideration – especially in terms of human interest and global security?

What is the role of the school curriculum in a world in which the perception is growing that ownership of knowledge is the most important determinant of the balance of power in any social reality?

7.2.2 ORDERING THE PRIORITIES

In order to meet the demands of a society in which communities are becoming increasingly autonomous, in which diversity (subjectivity) is becoming more important than "sameness" (objectivity), and, most important, in which knowledge is expanding at an alarming rate,

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curricular knowledge will have to be selected and ordered to meet the following demands:

- *The promotion of equal access to curricular knowledge:* Although this does not mean that all children will have access to the same knowledge, it does mean that the association with curricular knowledge would have to have positive results for all children. In the light of the growing importance of knowledge as a "commodity" that determines or gives access to "life-chances", and especially insofar as a lack of knowledge may give rise to exploitation or discrimination, it is important for equal opportunities of access to curricular knowledge to be enhanced. This is the only way in which all children will have the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills required to take control of their own lives.
- *The promotion of a curriculum that will make provision for both technical as well as liberal arts knowledge:* It seems as though one of the most important functions of the school curriculum would have to be to supply the technological skills necessary for an economy that is increasingly based upon high-tech expertise. However, Wellington (Kraak 1991:429) cautions that without a broader context of knowledge, skills are empty and may produce "lists of skills which are often trivial and demeaning". This may create the danger of making trainees "hopelessly vulnerable to changes in society and technology" and open to exploitation. The solution to this problem seems to lie in a technical curriculum that inclines more to the liberal arts and an academic curriculum that provides for general knowledge as well as specific skills relevant to the immediate and future social and economic reality of the student.
- *The encouragement of enterprise:* It is imperative that the school curriculum will encourage initiative and resourcefulness so that all children may be properly equipped to take control of their own economically independent futures.
- *The fostering of a caring spirit:* The school curriculum will have to make provision for knowledge with a bias towards caring insofar as we all share the same world and are dependent upon each other. This will mean that the "wholeness" of the universe, and the

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interdependency of human and human, of nature and nature, as well as that of human and nature will have to be emphasised. At the same time, a spirit of caring will prevent the exploitation of human beings and/or the environment for the material enhancement of some to the detriment of others.

- *The sanctioning of knowledge that will lead to informed choices:* This is closely related to the above. In order to foster a caring spirit and promote tolerance the curriculum will have to include a broad liberal arts base: knowledge that will encourage informed choices and prevent narrow-mindedness. Knowledge that will cultivate a balanced understanding of humane relationships among people, as well as between people and the environment, and, hence, will cultivate a capacity for critical reflection. Moreover, such knowledge will cultivate a capacity for autonomous judgement. In other words, knowledge that will "empower" persons so that they can take a stand against discrimination while, at the same time, equipping leaders to be humane. Fundamental to making informed choices in this age – an age marked by a vast escalation of knowledge – is to be in possession of the basic skills through which access to the huge body of knowledge (that constitutes the total world culture) would be possible.
- *The cultivation of confidence:* This means that, in a multi-cultural society, cultural tolerance will have to be cultivated. In other words, that the school curriculum will not include only "high" or only "popular" culture, but that curricular knowledge will include knowledge to the effect that all cultures are of equal worth. Confidence is dependent upon the acceptance of an "own" identity.
- *The promotion of a healthy scepticism:* In this respect, the role of the teacher will be vital. The teacher will have the responsibility of using curricular knowledge in such a way that it will become the means by which the child will be equipped for taking control of his/her own learning process. Children will have to be encouraged to ask "why?" Such questioning is not intended as a means of promoting unrest or chaos, but, on the contrary, to nurture a healthy scepticism. The important role of the teacher will be to prevent the school curriculum from becoming a selection of facts

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that have to be memorised and repeated *ad infinitum*. However, the teacher will also have the responsibility of making sure that each child will be provided with the basic knowledge and skills that would equip him/her for a life-long learning experience.

In an effort to prevent unjustifiable control of the school curriculum by any special interest group, and in an effort to promote "democratic" involvement in the knowledge-producing processes, alternative ways of supervising the school curriculum will have to be considered. In this respect a co-operative approach seems to be a viable option.

7.3 RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

In the course of this study it has become clear that power – whether social, political or economic *power* – is *part of everyday life*. What also emerged is the fact that the outcome of each power struggle implies a change in the perception of the "power" ascribed to knowledge and that, rather than preceding a cultural revolution (which does not take place overnight), a *school curriculum* is the *outcome* of such a change.

It is manifestly clear that *curricular knowledge*, therefore, *disempowers* as well as *empowers* in accordance with perceived constraints at the time of defining "democratic" knowledge in terms of the prevailing or emerging paradigm of truth. The implication of this is that

- there is a relation between demands in the struggle for power and the school curriculum;
- the dominant power structure in society (which is the outcome of past power struggles) is reflected in the school curriculum;
- demands from past power struggles remain reflected in the school curriculum until such time as they are effectively challenged by demands stemming from major shifts in the social consciousness;
- each power struggle challenges the prevailing "oppressive power structure" insofar as it is perceived to be still evident in the school curriculum;
- each power struggle aims at restructuring the balance of power in society – in terms of "humanising" a certain group of people – by breaking down one division or more perceived to be oppressive in the "status" of knowledge;

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- each power struggle establishes its own dominance through the reinterpretation (within time and space) of "democracy" in terms of "important" knowledge;
- each power struggle breeds its own antithesis in terms of the "truth" of knowledge; and, thus,
- despite power struggles in the past, contemporary power struggles claim that curricular knowledge is prejudiced or biased.

The significance of this, as Baker (1994:69) points out, is that "controversies range over many aspects of schooling ... but the most important of all is the debate over the curriculum. In the end, what children learn – whether it relates to moral, spiritual, social, academic, practical, or vocational development – is what matters most". That is why demands in the struggle for knowledge power focus on *meanings* and *relevancy*: lack of "relevant" knowledge is seen to be one of the fundamental reasons of not having access to power structures in the social reality. However, on account of a growing perception that knowledge (all kinds of knowledge) is one of the most "democratic" ways of gaining access to the power structures in society, the focus of demands is on "relevant" knowledge to the effect that this will be instrumental in overcoming all forms of discrimination in accordance with the (sometimes opposing) interpretation of basic human rights in the democratic ideal.

The focus of demands in the struggle for knowledge power are indicative of the fact that none of the attempts at "equality" (or humanising yet another group of "oppressed" people) in terms of access to a school curriculum based on the modern paradigm of truth – central to which is the *status of scientific knowledge* as the epitome of the hierarchical power structure – has been effective in preventing discrimination or control in the power structures in Western-oriented societies. Consequently, it is the perceived "discrimination" evident in the status of scientific knowledge in the existing school curriculum that is at the root of all the prevailing power struggles.

There is evidence of an emerging conception acknowledging that the modern quest for *individual liberation* – by virtue of the control of nature implicit in the development of scientific knowledge – has resulted

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in alienating humans from their fellow humans as well as in *discrimination against nature*. For the first time in modern history the demand on the school curriculum is to accommodate knowledge pertinent to the non-human world on equal terms in the power structure. Based on the assumption that the self-realisation of man can only take place within natural "limits" or constraints, attention is called to the fact that the dehumanisation of knowledge has, to a certain extent, led to both the dehumanisation of man and the exploitation of nature. As a consequence the focus of demands on the school curriculum has shifted towards humanising knowledge in an effort to preserve mankind as part of nature, and most important, on equal terms with nature. For the first time ever, we see in the latter part of the twentieth century that, in the quest for equality in terms of basic human rights, the concern in the power struggle is with the inclusion of demands from the non-human world.

Thus, because a new ordering of priorities is reflected in "demands" on the curriculum (although it takes time before such a new paradigm of truth is reflected in curricular knowledge), it is evident that a school curriculum does not always succeed in reproducing an intended power structure. If, however, any "new" school curriculum "is to be effectively established and contribute to the resolution" of a power crisis, it "must '*correspond*' broadly to the economic and political requirements of the dominant cultural group. Once established, this correspondence may weaken, making the schooling system less effective as a reproductive agent" which means that, as the school curriculum becomes "increasingly out of line with the surrounding social reality", demands from newer power struggles will increase (Gordon 1990:8,9; *italics added by this author*).

Nevertheless, the balance of power reflected in the school curriculum is closely related to the *dominant power structure* insofar as the dominant interpretation of "democratic" social relations (which is the outcome of previous power struggles) is always reflected in the school curriculum. This is simply because to educate means to impart the norms and values contemporary society believes in: to equip the student at school with knowledge deemed necessary and important in the social consciousness – and *legitimised* by the dominant *paradigm of truth*. Reflected in a

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school curriculum, therefore, are the prevailing norms regarding the "worth" of various bodies of knowledge in terms of both humankind and environment; in other words, the prevailing norms of a democratic social, political and economic reality.

Ultimately, then, it is possible to identify *two* important (related though somewhat contradictory) attributes that are characteristic of the *relationship* between the school curriculum and the struggle for power. What has become clear in the course of this study is, *firstly*, that the focus of demands, intent on breaking down certain perceived discriminatory "divisions" in curricular knowledge, are *determined by changing perceptions about the power of knowledge* governed, to a large extent, by changes in the social, political or economic reality (hence influences external to the school curriculum as such); that, consequently, these demands on the school curriculum are part of a larger struggle against the authority of truth (encompassing the whole fabric of human existence in such a social reality) – and the school curriculum a tool in the struggle to change the rules of power for society as a whole. *Secondly*, that the focus of these demands, intent on challenging or justifying the balance of power reflected in curricular knowledge, is at one and the same time *determined by the reinterpretation of identity in the ideal of democracy*, as part of the larger framework of changing perceptions about the power of knowledge in agreement with basic human rights, and, as such, demands on the school curriculum (in the struggle for knowledge power) are essential for maintaining a *democratic balance between power and knowledge* in (and through) the school curriculum.

In themselves facts have no authority
(Marcel Gabriel)

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